Divine Scripture and Human Emotion in Maximus the Confessor

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Divine Scripture and Human Emotion in Maximus the Confessor

Exegesis of the Human Heart

By

Andrew J. Summerson

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To Laura

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Abbreviations

N.B. The following are abbreviations for series titles. For patristic texts, I have generally followed the abbreviations found in G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961). For Evagrius, I also made recourse to standard titles and abbreviations found on Joel Kalvesmaki's website: http://evagriusponticus.net/.

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers Series
ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers Series
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca
CD	Corpus Dionysiacum
CPG	Clavis Patrum Graecorum
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten (drei) Jahrhunderte
GNO	Gregorii Nysseni Opera
LS	*The Hellenistic Philosophers*, eds. A. A. Long—D. N. Sedley
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
SEA	Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SVF	Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta

Introduction

> The monk's own heart was the new book. What required infinitely skilled exegesis and long spiritual experience were the 'movements of the heart,' and the strategies and snares that the Devil laid within it.
>
> PETER BROWN, *The Body and Society*

• • •

> By his passion, he grants us *apatheia*, and by his sufferings, liberation, and by his death, life eternal.
>
> MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium 61*

• • •

> Today, he who is unapproachable in essence becomes approachable to me and he suffers the passion to free me from my passions.
>
> Byzantine vesperal Theotokion on Wednesday evening of the fourth week of the Great Fast

⁘

Maximus the Confessor (c. 580–662) enjoyed a significant reappraisal of his thought in twentieth-century theological scholarship and moved from the margins of the history of dogma to center-stage in the renewal of patristic studies. Living in the seventh century toward the end of the patristic period, Maximus recapitulated and developed various currents of ascetic, metaphysical, biblical, and dogmatic thought, and decisively impacted the formation of Byzantine theology. A cursory glance at liturgical hymnography and later theologians demonstrates Maximus's influence on subsequent theologizing in the Christian East and beyond.

Nevertheless, the contemporary recovery of Maximus the Confessor's theological project remains partial. His embroilment in the monothelite crisis—the pains of which earned him the epithet "Confessor"—moved many scholars to analyze his writings from the perspective of the history of dogma. While

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Maximus is a decisive figure in post-Chalcedonian theology for his precise account of the two wills of Christ, the Confessor's literary output concerns more than simply doctrinal polemics, which predominantly occupied the end of his life.

Maximus is most creative in his appropriation of the earlier tradition. He is an acute reader of texts, and his *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, a series of responses to scriptural difficulties posed by his friend the Libyan abbot, Thalassius, was born from this practice. *Ad Thalassium* represents the Confessor's second-largest work, surpassed only by his *Ambigua*, explanations of difficult passages in the sermons of Gregory the Theologian and the works of Dionysius the Areopagite. That Maximus's two largest works are commentaries demonstrate that his preferred mode of theology was commentary. Maximus's spiritual counsel, therefore, flows from his exegetical acumen. This is particularly evident in *Ad Thalassium*, in which Maximus deals with both biblical interpretation and the ascetic concerns posed by Thalassius's monastic community, and confronts the problem of the passions and the moral goal of *apatheia*, the Stoic-inspired term that took root in the Christian East, particularly in ascetical writings, to describe the perfected Christian. In dealing with the subject of the passions in light of biblical exegesis, Maximus followed a long tradition of adapting and reforming philosophical attitudes about human passibility through the lens of Scripture.

This book analyzes Maximus's unique account of *apatheia* and human passibility contained in *Ad Thalassium* and considers it in the larger context of his theology. I argue that the interplay between the passions and cultivating *apatheia* serves as a unifying theme throughout the text and that Maximus both inherited scriptural thinking on the passions from earlier authors and develops it from insight gained through meditation on the Word of God. Chapter 1 frames *Ad Thalassium* in the context of Maximus's life while addressing some of the factors in contemporary scholarship that have contributed to this partial view of the Confessor's ascetic thought in scriptural commentary. Chapter 2 lays out the principal themes and problems articulated by philosophical and early Christian writers whom Maximus engages in his work. Christian exegetes adapted, modified, and transformed classic Stoic teachings to fit Christian categories derived from their engagement of Scripture. Maximus's responses regarding human passibility are conditioned by the questions raised by these earlier writers. Chapter 2 demonstrates the thematic unity of *Ad Thalassium*, connecting the *Introduction* and *Question 1* with the rest of the work. A fundamental scriptural difficulty is at stake in the *Introduction* and *Question 1*: How is the ideal of *apatheia* for a Christian ascetic reconciled with the passionate

language of the Bible? In other words, what is the significance of the revelation of the incarnate Christ, who willingly unites himself with the passionate state of man?

Having shown the interlocking themes of human emotion and scriptural interpretation that guide Maximus's global project in *Ad Thalassium*, the rest of the book turns to his account of specific emotional states and his analysis of their transformation in Christ. As he alludes in *Question 1*, Maximus is aware of the commonplace taxonomy of the four passions, from which are derived all the others: fear, grief, pleasure, and desire. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss Maximus's specific teachings on the passions—fear and grief—and the unique role these emotional states play in the Christian life, which begins here on earth and continues in eternity before the throne of God. In discussing both these emotions, Maximus sheds light on the Christian's proper relationship to pleasure, hence why it is not dealt with in a separate chapter. Finally, Chapter 5 explores Maximus's teaching on love and desire in *Ad Thalassium* and outlines conclusions drawn from his exegesis about their role in Christian perfection. Maximus's analysis of desire departs from Christ's divine *philanthropia*, understood as his benevolent descent to humankind, both in his birth but specifically on the Cross. Drawing on the earlier Christian tradition, Christ's *philanthropia* provides the objective structure of redeemed love and healthy, affective desire that each Christian must subjectively appropriate. Maximus consistently teaches that human passibility has a durative value past this earthly life, extending into eternity in heaven. In what follows, I lay out how Maximus understands the process of transformation, from fallible human passion to divinized, stable emotions, which Maximus incorporates into his theology. These latter chapters begin with historical context in which Maximus works out his account of these emotions. Maximus is thoroughly engaged with this tradition and responding to these earlier Christian writers. Hence, Maximus's unique teaching is best seen against the horizon of these prior thinkers.

This present study privileges Maximus's ascetic writings, primarily *Ad Thalassium*, to show how monastic formation and scriptural engagement inform his account of human passibility. I have attempted to make sense of *Ad Thalassium* as a whole while prioritizing texts that have received little commentary. Except for Paul Blowers's admirable introduction to *Ad Thalassium*, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy*, few scholars have considered *Ad Thalassium*, much less individual works of the Confessor on their own terms. This present study is the first part of a larger project to read and interpret Maximus's principal works. For this reason, I have deliberately avoided a detailed analysis of the *Ambigua* in view of my next study: to read and interpret the *Ambigua*

as a creative dialogue between Maximus and his revered teacher, Gregory the Theologian. It is by no mistake that the Confessor's most evocative theology is enshrined in the commentary of other texts. Maximus's creative interpretation can teach us how to better engage the past for the benefit of our own present theological inquiries.

CHAPTER 1

Maximus the Monk, Interpreter of Tradition

Abstract

This chapter discusses Maximus's approach to theology as an ascetic and an exegete. Beginning with the salient details of Maximus's life, I demonstrate the role monastic formation plays in framing the Confessor's theological approach. I then consider Maximus as an interpreter of sacred texts, arguing that scholarship, in emphasizing Maximus's original contribution to the history of dogma, has neglected the source of his creativity: the critical reflection on the prior tradition. I then turn to the specific historical argument that frames the current study, the status of human passions and its perfection as *apatheia*. I narrate the reception of this Stoic account of human passibility in Early Christian biblical interpretation. I expose the problems that naturally arise from this critical synthesis of differing perspectives, which help to understand Maximus's ascetical and exegetical project in *Ad Thalassium*. Heir to this tradition, Maximus sets out to better understand human emotion, its conceptual difficulties, and its role in the Christian life through a process of exegetical discernment.

Maximus writes *Ad Thalassium* as an ascetic for ascetics, responding to the problems that assail a monk both in Scripture and his daily labors. Maximus's monastic formation is the surest biographical fact about his early life and education. Reviewing this aspect of Maximus's life will help situate his theological project. Most reconstructions of Maximus's life depend on the Greek *vita*, dated to the tenth century.[1] According to this version, Maximus was born to a noble family in Constantinople around 580. After leaving the trappings of the imperial court, he embraced a life of monasticism. Following journeys in Asia Minor, Palestine, North Africa, and Rome, he was arrested and sent to trial in Constantinople for his assertive defense of Christ's two wills in the monothelite debate that ensued in the seventh century. After he was punished

1 Polycarp Sherwood, *An Annotated Date-List of the Works of Maximus the Confessor* (Rome: Herder, 1952). For a recent discussion of the manuscript tradition and scholarly literature, see Bram Roosen, "Maximi Confessoris Vitae et Passiones Graecae: The Development of a Hagiographic Dossier," *Byzantion* 80 (2010): 408–461. More generally, see Pauline Allen, "The Life and Times of Maximus the Confessor," in *OHMC*, 3–14.

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with mutilation—his right hand and tongue were cut off—he was exiled to modern-day Georgia, but not before generating a significant body of writings.

However, the discovery of the Syriac life of Maximus has led to a reconsideration of the accepted chronology and biographical details of the Confessor.[2] The author of the Syriac account, George (or Gregory) of Resh'aina, claims to be a near contemporary of Maximus and a member of Sophronius's clergy in Jerusalem. George's view is decisively Monophysite and seeks to discredit Maximus through literary defamation. According to George, Maximus was born from the womb of a Persian woman and a Samaritan merchant. He resorts to outright slander in the title: "The history concerning the wicked Maximus of Palestine who blasphemed against this creator, and whose tongue was cut out."[3] The Syriac *vita* has polarized scholars. Some have granted it limited acceptance,[4] while Jean-Claude Larchet has outright rejected it.[5] Recently, Phil Booth has used it to re-evaluate Maximus's role in seventh-century social history. Booth accepts the Syriac life and Maximus's Palestinian origin for three reasons.[6] First, the Syriac *vita*, dated to the seventh century, is much closer to Maximus's life and times than the earliest Greek version, dated to the tenth century. The Greek *vita* has a much more complicated manuscript tradition and exists in three recensions. Furthermore, the tenth-century version depends heavily on the *vita* of Theodore the Studite, casting doubt on any plausible biographical reconstruction from the Greek hagiographical

2 Sebastian Brock, "An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor," *Analecta Bollandiana* 91 (1973): 299–346. For a new date-list of Maximus's works that takes into account the Syriac life, along with a re-evaluation of the material in Maximus's *Letters*, see Marek Jankowiak and Phil Booth, "A New Annotated Date-List of the Works of Maximus the Confessor" in *OHMC*, 19–83. While Jankowiak and Booth have made changes to the dating of Maximus's works, their explanatory notes still depend on the numeration given by Sherwood. Hence, understanding Jankowiak and Booth's list is aided by knowledge of Sherwood's work.

3 Brock, "An Early Syriac Life," 301.

4 Irénée-Henri Dalmais, "La vie de saint Maxime le confesseur reconsidérée?" in *Studia Patristica* 16, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Louvain: Peeters, 1985), 26–30; Brian E. Daley, "Making a Human Will Divine: Augustine and Maximus Confessor on Christ and Human Salvation," in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, ed. Aristotle Papanikolaou and George E. Demacopulos (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 101–126. Pauline Allen gives the most cautious reconstruction of Maximus's life drawing on both the Greek and Syriac sources. See "Life and Times of Maximus the Confessor," in *OHMC*, 10–15.

5 Jean-Claude Larchet, *La divinization de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 8–12.

6 Phil Booth, *Crisis of Empire: Doctrine and Dissent in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 143–154. See also Christian Boudignon, "Maxime le Confesseur était-il constantinopolitain?" in *Philomathestatos: Studies in Greek and Byzantine Texts Presented to Jacques Noret for his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Bart Janssens, Bram Roosen, and Paul Van Deun. Louvain: Peeters, 2004, 15–22.

tradition.[7] Third, Maximus's erudition has long been considered a product of Constantinopolitan education. However, this view fails to consider the decline of classical education—both globally and in Constantinople[8]—and undervalues the monastic tutelage available in Palestine.[9] Booth likewise explains Maximus's references to the imperial court as rhetorical, not biographical.[10] Booth's alternative rendering situates Maximus's education within the monastic tradition, where he figures into a Palestinian circle, together with John Moschus and Sophronius of Jerusalem. This approach creates a clearer connection between the monastic formation and the concerns that influence Maximus's work in *Ad Thalassium*.

However, to evaluate Maximus's theology in terms of ecclesial and political dissent is misleading. Booth argues that the eucharistic piety found in the writings of Sophronius, John Moschus, and Maximus is an innovation in monastic discipline, one that deploys a divergent ecclesiology and a competing vision of civilization from that of the empire. Booth sees this as a historical shift in monastic piety from privatized, aliturgical prayer to an emphasis on the eucharistic

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7 For the background on the different recensions of the Greek *vita*, see Robert Devreese, "La Vie de S. Maxime le Confesseur et ses recensions," *Analecta Bollandiana* 85 (1967): 285–316; Bronwen Neil, "The Greek Life of Maximus the Confessor (*BHG* 1234)," in *Studia Patristica* 36, ed. M. F. Wiles and E. J. Yarnold (Louvain: Peeters, 2001), 46–53; Roosen, "Maximi Confessoris Vitae et Passiones Graecae," 185–226.

8 "The old educational system failed to survive the demise of the urban network of late antiquity, and even in the capital secular education largely collapsed … books became desperately rare." Averil Cameron, "Byzantium and the Past in the Seventh Century: The Search for Redefinition" in *Changing Cultures in Early Byzantium* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), v.254.

9 Booth claims that a possible source for Maximus's education would be Sophronius's library, the "host of divine books" that Maximus describes in *Ep.* 13 (PG 91: 533A). Cf. Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 147–148. For his claim of the underappreciation for resources in Palestine, see *Crisis of Empire*, 141 n31. Christian Boudignon argues that Alexandria could be a possible place for Maximus's rearing. id., "Maxime était-il costantinopolitain?" See also Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 35–46, where he notes that Maximus's life coincides with a general demise of the educational system in the empire, especially in the capital. For a recent study of the intellectual culture in Palestine, see Michael W. Champion, *Explaining the Cosmos: Creation and Cultural Interaction in Late-Antique Gaza* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

10 For example, in *Letter* 12, Maximus writes: "It is better and more honorable to occupy the lowest rank before God than to hold the highest ranks in the service of the emperor here below in the things on the earth." *Ep.* 12 (PG 91: 505B). Considering the context of the letter, Booth claims that the statement is rhetorical rather than autobiographical. See Booth, *Crisis of Empire*, 146ff. Blowers largely follows Booth's suggestions. See Blowers, *Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, 25–29.

assembly. Booth describes this phenomenon as protest against the heretical imperial legislation concerning Christ's two natures post-Chalcedon. By contrast, Maximus's *Mystagogy*—Booth's selected text to support his claim—falls into the genre of *liturgical* commentary.[11] Material about the Eucharist would be expected in a reflection on the Divine Liturgy. It is therefore hardly a revolutionary turn in Maximus's writing. Second, this position depends on what Blowers considers "an argument from silence and an oversimplification of the piety [Maximus] inherited from Eastern monastic communities, where, in fact, the eucharistic *synaxis* had played an increasingly vital role."[12]

Booth's choice to prioritize texts that accentuate Maximus's role in doctrinal and political conflict obscures the diverse goals of Maximus's many writings and risks trivializing his role in the theological tradition and social history to which he belonged. We see this tendency also in Byzantine historian Averil Cameron, who claims that the choice of genre, namely commentary, evidences Maximus's conservatism in a social landscape that felt increasingly unsafe.[13]

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11 For Booth's analysis of the text, see *Crisis of Empire*, 170–185. More generally, see Pascal Mueller-Jourdan, *Typologie spatio-temporelle de l'Ecclesia byzantine: La Mystagogie de Maxime le Confesseur dans la culture philosophique de l'antiquité tardive* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). For relevant commentary on Maximus's *Mystagogy* in the liturgical tradition, see Robert F. Taft, "Is the Liturgy Described in the Mystagogia of Maximus the Confessor Byzantine, Palestinian, or Neither?" *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* III.8 (2011): 223–270; id. "Were There Once Old Testament Readings in the Byzantine Divine Liturgy? Apropos of an Article by Sysse Gudrun Engberg," *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* III.8 (2011): 271–311. Taft argues that Maximus is speaking about the liturgy of Constantinople. This has been contested by Sysse Engberg, who argues for the Palestinian liturgy as Maximus's source for commentary. See Sysse Gudrun Engberg, "The Prophetologion and the Triple-Lection Theory: the Genesis of a Liturgical Book," *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* III.8 (2006): 67–92; ead., "The Needle and the Haystack: Searching for Evidence of the Eucharistic Old Testament Lection in the Constantinopolitan Rite," *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* III.13 (2016): 47–60.

12 Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, 168.

13 "Maximus the Confessor and after him John Damascene both produce complete systems of knowledge … Christian history and Christian authority is [sic] defined, as it is in the works of ps-Dionysius the Areopagite, as consisting in the Scriptures, the Councils and the works of the approved, or select, Fathers. All necessary human knowledge is to be found and confined in that chain of authority." Averil Cameron, "Disputations, Polemical Literature, and the Formation of Opinion in the Early Byzantine Period," *Changing Cultures in Early Byzantium*, III.106. Beate Regina Suchla, upon her comparison of the Syriac version and the shorter Greek recension, has determined which of these commentaries should be correctly attributed to John of Scythopolis. See John of Scythopolis, *Corpus Dionysiacum 4: Ioannis Scythopolitani prologus et scholia in Dionysii Areopagitae librum 'De divinis nominibus' cum addiamentis interpretum allorum*, PTS 62, ed. Beate Regina Suchla (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011); For further comment, see Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clarendon

For Cameron, Maximus is a traditionalist holding onto an old world order as turbulent change threatens the great empire in its loss to the Persians and the Arabs.

While his embroilment in controversy earned him the epithet "Confessor," Maximus's writings contain far more than the controversies at the service of Booth and Cameron's historical reconstruction. The tendency to overemphasize the polemical and defensive character of Maximus's work overshadows works like *Ad Thalassium*, which predates his mature anti-monothelite works by at least ten years.[14] *Ad Thalassium* demonstrates classic Maximian motifs—for example, his doctrine of the *logoi*[15] and early formulations of his later distinction regarding the gnomic will.[16] Nevertheless, Maximus's earlier work is framed outside the problems of doctrine that vexed the empire. Instead, Maximus writes for the spiritual benefit of Thalassius and his monks, exhibiting none of the polemical features that Booth mentions in his book. By removing the doctrinal and defensive lens that colors Maximus's work and examining texts that do not bear the pressure of controversy, a more robust figure of the Confessor emerges.

1 The Doctrinal Shadow over *Ad Thalassium*

Hans Urs von Balthasar's book *Cosmic Liturgy* is largely responsible for retrieving Maximus from the margins of the history of dogma and placing him at the center of Catholic *ressourcement* theology.[17] The merits of Balthasar's work include a lively interpretation of Maximus's difficult prose, and Balthasar's

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Press, 1998); see also Carlo Dell'Osso, *Cristo e logos: il calcedonismo del VI secolo in oriente* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2010), 70–72.

14 According to Sherwood: "between 630 and 633–634"; Booth and Jankowiak: "before 633/4." "A New Date-List" in *OHMC*, 29. With the accepted date of the Ekthesis being 638, Booth and Jankowiak date mature anti-monothelite works from 643 onwards.

15 For example, *qu. Thal.* 13 (CCSG 7: 95–97) and *qu. Thal.* 35 (CCSG 7: 239–241).

16 For Maximus's discussion of the relationship between human fallenness and the gnomic will, see *qu. Thal.* 1 (CCSG 7: 47), *qu. Thal.* 21 (CCSG 7: 127–129), and *qu. Thal.* 61 (CCSG 22: 101).

17 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe according to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Brian E. Daley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003). On Balthasar's relationship to the ressourcement movement, see Edward T. Oakes, "Balthasar and Ressourcement: An Ambiguous Relationship in Ressourcement," *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 278–288. For a more detailed account of Balthasar's use of Maximus, see Cyril O'Regan, "Von Balthasar and Thick Retrieval: Post-Chalcedonian Symphonic Theology," *Gregorianum* 77, no. 2 (1996): 227–260.

translations throughout the monograph mediated access to Maximus's texts for the greater part of the twentieth century. Balthasar characterizes Maximus as the creative architect of a Christian metaphysics that fully incorporates the Chalcedonian definition of Christ's two natures. While Balthasar's ambitious systematic presentation largely holds sway in modern scholarship,[18] some have noted the limits of his presentation, not least the anachronistic problems of his research. Balthasar puts Maximus in conversation with Hegelian questions all too readily, a method that at times distorts the Confessor's thought.[19] Balthasar's organizing vision will come to bear on his treatment of human passibility, which I will discuss below. Another distortion in scholarship casts Maximus as a protoscholastic who anticipates Thomas Aquinas's appropriation of Aristotle.[20] While there are similarities in themes between Maximus and Thomas—such as a shared interest for questions of ontology and teleology, an appreciation of the *filioque*—this read of Maximus seems forced.[21]

Other contemporary theologians have incorporated aspects of his theology into more systematic works,[22] giving Maximus a wider audience. Furthermore,

18 Blowers openly admits his indebtedness to Balthasar, see Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, 103, passim, though not without some critical assessment. See ibid., 319ff. On the reception of Maximus the Confessor in modern times, Aidan Nichols, *Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Recent Scholarship*; Andrew Louth, "Recent Research on St. Maximus the Confessor: A Survey," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1998): 67–84; Joshua Lollar, "The Reception of Maximian Thought in the Modern Era" in *OHMC*, 564–80.

19 See Lollar, "The Reception of Maximian Thought," 570–571; Daley, "Translator's Forward" in *Cosmic Liturgy*, 16–17. For comments in this vein from one of Balthasar's contemporaries, see Polycarp Sherwood, "Survey of Recent Work on Saint Maximus the Confessor," *Traditio* 20 (1964): 428–437. For a more general investigation of Balthasar's engagement of patristic material see Brian E. Daley, "Balthasar's Reading of the Church Fathers," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187–206.

20 For example, Alain Riou, *Le monde et l'église selon Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1973); Jean Miguel Garrigues, *Maxime le Confesseur: La charité, avenir divin de l'homme* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1976); More recently, see Philipp G. Renczes, *Agir de Dieu et liberté de l'homme: Recherches sur l'anthropologie théologique de saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Cerf, 2004). For a critical look at Maximus's use of Aristotle, see Marius Portaru, "Classical Philosophical Influences: Aristotle and Platonism," in *OHMC*, 127–148.

21 See A. Edward Siecienski, "Maximus the Confessor and Ecumenism," in *OHMC*, 548–563. For another view, see Jean-Claude Larchet, *Maxime le Confesseur, médiateur entre l'Orient et l'Occident* (Paris: Cerf, 1998).

22 See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985); Id. *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006). For critique of Zizioulas, see Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, 185–86, 316–18. For another example of systematic theology that engages Maximus the Confessor,

several authors have explored philosophical issues as they relate to Maximus's thought.[23] However, scholars have dedicated little time to read individual works of Maximus and have sought to understand these texts on their own terms.[24] Nicholas Constas notes that even in the multiplication of studies on Maximus, there remains a relative lack of diversity of Maximus's texts cited in published works.[25] Hence, retrieval of Maximus in contemporary theology is partial due to the lack of research on singular texts and the bold, over-systematizations of his thought, which use only a small selection from his corpus.

Furthermore, most studies tend to underscore Maximus's role in the history of dogmatic development from Nicaea to Chalcedon at the expense of his exegetical work, following a trend in patristic studies that dominated the twentieth century.[26] For example, Balthasar considers Maximus's great

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See Nikolaos Loudovkios, *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010).

23 Eric Perl, "Methexis: Creation, Incarnation, and Deification in Saint Maximus the Confessor" (Ph.D. Diss. Yale University, 1991). Torstein Theodor Tollefson, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 126–132; More recently see the recent collected essays in the volume, *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher*, ed. Sotiris Mitralexis, Georgios Steiris, and Marcin Podbielski (Eugene: Veritas, 2017).

24 For example, Lars Thunberg's comprehensive volume *Microcosm and Mediator* uses Maximus as a pivot to move through topics of creation, fall, redemption, human vices, and virtues, but dedicates little time to analyzing at length specific texts in the main body of his work. *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, 2nd edition (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1995). Notable exceptions are Paul Blowers's study of *Ad Thalassium*, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor: An Investigation of the Quaestiones ad Thalassium* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991). On this work, see comments below. Regarding the *Ambigua*, see Joshua Lollar, *To See into the Life of Things: The Contemplation of Nature in Maximus the Confessor and His Predecessors* (Leiden: Brepols, 2013).

25 "Translations of Maximus's works are as necessary today as they were in the ninth century. That scholars are introduced to texts largely by way of translations can be confirmed by a footnote check of recent articles on Maximus the Confessor, which for the most part cite only those works or passages that have been translated into modern languages. Scholars are institutionally rewarded for promoting novel theories and interpretations of texts, but the limited range of citations in many secondary studies raises a question about the depth of their engagement with the actual primary sources." Nicholas Constas, "St. Maximus the Confessor: The Reception of His Thought in East and West," in *Knowing the Purpose of Everything through the Resurrection: Proceedings of the Symposium on St. Maximus the Confessor, Belgrade, October 18–21, 2012*, ed. Maxim Vasilijević (Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2013), 34.

26 For comment, see Brian E. Daley, *God Visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1–27.

accomplishment to be the integration of the Chalcedonian definition into theological exposition, virtually ignoring his exegetical contribution.[27] In keeping with this doctrinal emphasis, Maximus's theology is largely seen as a corrective to heretical strands of patristic thought, be it in Origen,[28] Evagrius,[29] or Dionysius.[30] The doctrinal perspective has often led to interpret Maximus as being in conflict with the past. He is judged to be either correcting his heritage—in the case of Origen, Evagrius, and Dionysius—or to be blatantly manipulating the patristic heritage to launch his own program. A good example of the latter is Balthasar's assertion that the presence of Gregory the Theologian in Maximus's *Ambigua* is simply an "ecclesial vehicle" for Maximus's own, more sophisticated theology.[31] Dalmais echoes this sentiment with respect to *Ad Thalassium*, claiming that Maximus's exegesis simply imitates Origen and that the scriptural difficulties presented by Thalassius provide a pretext for writing a "treatise of spiritual anthropology."[32]

Lack of interest in late patristic exegesis, a genre in decline during Maximus's time,[33] together with the scholarly emphasis on the dogmatic aspects of

27 Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*. For an exploration of Balthasar's engagement with Maximus and the Council of Chalcedon, see O'Regan, "Von Balthasar and Thick Retrieval: Post-Chalcedonian Symphonic Theology," esp. 227–260.

28 Polycarp Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor and His Refutation of Origenism* (Rome: Herder, 1955).

29 Irénée-Henri Dalmais, "L'héritage évagrien dans la synthèse de saint Maxime le Confesseur," in *Studia Patristica* 8, ed. F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), 356–363; Walther Völker, *Maximus Confessor als Meister des geistlichen Lebens* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1965).

30 See John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), 131–152. See also Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, esp. 115–126. It should be noted that Balthasar later offers a more positive assessment of Dionysius in his *Glory of the Lord*. For an exploration of this change in position, see O'Regan, *Thick Retrieval*, 229–245.

31 Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 37. For insight on Gregory the Theologian's influence on Maximus, see Andrew Louth, "St. Gregory the Theologian and St. Maximus the Confessor: The Shaping of Tradition," in *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Maurice Wiles*, ed. Sarah Coakley and David Pailin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 117–130.

32 Irénée-Henri Dalmais, "Introduction," *Saint Maxime le Confesseur: Le mystère du salut*, trans. Astérios Argyriou (Namur: Editions du Soleil levant, 1964), 24.

33 "Il motivo che ha spinto alla sua opera il primo catenista è stata solo la constatazione che di fronte alla ricchezza dell'esegesi precedente, diventava inutile cercare qualcosa di nuovo e conveniva invece riportare, in forma abbreviata, il vecchio, una constatazione, cioè, di inferiorità intellettuale e culturale; il successo strepitoso che accolse questa iniziativa è chiaro indizio che essa interpretava l'esigenza di una età culturalmente decaduta e conscia di tale decadenza." Manlio Simonetti, *Lettera e/o allegoria: un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1985), 356.

Maximus's thought, divert attention from the fact that his two largest works are commentaries. Both his *Ambigua* and *Ad Thalassium* show Maximus engaging both the patristic and scriptural tradition that precedes him.[34] Maximus is first and foremost an interpreter of texts. In this sense, his project ought to be considered broadly exegetical. In line with this mode of thinking, Pelikan argues for a re-evaluation of the Confessor's use of sources: "Such, then, was the structure of authority in the theology of Maximus: the teaching 'of a council or of a father or of scripture,' but in fact of all three, in a dynamic interrelation by which no one of the three could be isolated as the sole authority."[35] Maximus's preferred literary form is *scholia*, where he reflects on difficult passages in an interpretive role. This type of literature is by nature occasional and usually a response to a request to aid in understanding a difficult text. Louth describes Maximus's interpretive vocation well: "Although Maximus the Confessor is a speculative theologian of genius, he does not see himself, as would some later theologians, as *constructing* a theological system. He sees himself as interpreting a tradition that has come down to him, and interpreting it for the sake of others."[36]

2 The False Distinction between Scripture and Asceticism in the Interpretation of *Ad Thalassium*

In light of Maximus's traditional—but not traditionalist—stance, the two principal themes in *Ad Thalassium*, the ascetic doctrine of the passions and Scripture, are not two disconnected subjects in the early Church. If, as Pelikan and Louth suggest, Maximus is fundamentally a man interpreting his forebears for his contemporaries, we should be mindful of the interrelationship between these two traditions—exegetical and ascetic—when approaching

34 For a discussion of Maximus's retrieval of the past through critical reading, see Augustine Casiday, *Remember the Days of Old: Orthodox Thinking on the Patristic Heritage* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013), 75ff.

35 Jaroslav Pelikan, "'Council or Father or Scripture' in Maximus the Confessor," in *The Heritage of the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Georges Florovsky*, ed. David Neiman and Margaret A. Schatkin (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1973), 287. The title of the essay is itself a reference to *Opusc. 15* (PG 91: 180). Pelikan also references a significant passage where Maximus puts the authority of Gregory the Theologian on the same level as Scripture. For a recent treatment of Maximus's engagement with Gregory, see Nicholas Constas, "Introduction," in *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), xiii–xv.

36 Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 21. Italics in the original.

Ad Thalassium, lest Maximus be divorced from the ascetic milieu in which he wrote and the theological enterprise out of which he worked.

While exegetical commentary is Maximus's primary method of theology, few have discerned how Scripture shapes Maximus's account of one of the principal concerns of *Ad Thalassium*: human passibility. Already Photius, the earliest witness to Maximus's largest exegetical work,[37] divides the text according to subject matter: The *Introduction* and *Question 1* form a treatise on the passions, while *Questions 2–65* deal with scriptural difficulties. The distinction fails to account for the ascetic themes that Maximus weaves throughout *Ad Thalassium* and the way he uses exegesis to provide adequate answers to these problems.

Balthasar treats the passions and *apatheia* in *Cosmic Liturgy* without proper historical contextualization and neglects the role these themes play in Maximus's exegesis. For Balthasar, Maximus is more original than traditional because the Confessor succeeds in lifting *apatheia* from a rationalizing, disincarnate "gnosticism" and integrates it into his own (whether Maximus or Balthasar's) original "theo-logic" of the Incarnation as interpreted through the lens of Chalcedon. Hence, Balthasar writes: "*Apatheia* can play the role in Maximus's thought that it does only because it conforms to the deepest structure of his thought."[38] Related to this, Balthasar considers Maximus's teaching on *pathos* to be derived from his respect for "creaturely existence." Here, as has been noted elsewhere, Balthasar is concerned with the problems of German idealism and sees Maximus as an ally to construct a convincing Christian alternative.[39] On close analysis, Balthasar's view gives the impression that Maximus simply lifts a token word and applies his own meaning to it. Balthasar's subsequent interpretation on synthesizing *apatheia* and the polarities of the "spiritual" and the "physical" is determined by this viewpoint.[40]

Paul Blowers, beginning with his landmark study of *Ad Thalassium*,[41] is a close reader of Maximus, teaching us much about the Confessor's thought. His work is largely divided along the same lines as Photius's distinction: 1) An

37 Eriugena's Latin translation (864–866) is our earliest manuscript evidence of *Ad Thalassium*, while Photius's testimony is only bibliographical. He does, however, summarize accurately the *Introduction* as well as the difficulties in Scripture dealt with in the work. The *Bibliotheca* dates to the ninth century.

38 Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 283.

39 Daley, "Translator's Forward," *Cosmic Liturgy*, 15–16; Blowers, *Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, 320–321.

40 For a recent view that draws on Balthasar's position, see Frederick D. Aquino, "Maximus the Confessor," in *The Spiritual Senses*, ed. Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 104–111.

41 Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy*.

explanation of the particulars of Maximus's biblical hermeneutics[42] and 2) An exploration of Maximus's account of the human passibility and the patristic theme of the passions.[43] In his detailed study of Maximus's *Ad Thalassium*, Blowers shows great facility in navigating Maximus's difficult prose and provides his own translation of texts. He claims the prevailing ascetical-spiritual content in *Ad Thalassium* has led scholars away from considering it as an exegetical work on its own terms.[44] To this end, Blowers locates *Ad Thalassium* within the literary tradition of monastic instruction, such as the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, the monastic rules of Basil and John Cassian, as well as the correspondence of Palestinian monks Barsinufius and John, and the works of Athanasius of Sinai. Blowers concludes that, given the history of the genre and the scope of the work, no narrative structure unites the disparate *quaestiones*. Rather, Maximus responds to scriptural difficulties—either real or apparent—in "a stylized mode of moral and spiritual instruction" for the benefit and education of Thalassius's monks.[45]

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42 See id. "The Anagogical Imagination: Maximus the Confessor and the Legacy of the Origenian Hermeneutics," *Origeniana Sexta: Origène et la Bible*, ed. Giles Dorvial and Alain Le Boulluec (Louvain: Peeters, 1995), 639–654; id. "The World in the Mirror of the Holy Scripture: Maximus the Confessor's Short Hermeneutical Treatise in Ambiguum ad Joannem 37," in *In Dominico Eloquio: In Lordly Eloquence. Essays on Patristic Exegesis in Honor of Robert Louis Wilken*, ed. Paul Blowers, Angela Russell Christman, and David G. Hunter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 408–426; id. "The Interpretive Dance: Concealment, Disclosure, and Deferral of Meaning in Maximus the Confessor's Hermeneutical Theology," *Knowing the Purpose of Creation through the Resurrection*, 253–259; id. "The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ as 'Saturated Phenomenon' and as Key to the Dynamics of Biblical Revelation in Saint Maximus the Confessor," in *What Is The Bible?: The Patristic Doctrine of Scripture*, ed. Matthew Baker and Mark Mourachian (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 83–102.

43 Blowers has generated many valuable studies in this regard. The basic articles that deal with Maximus's account of the passions in light of the patristic tradition are "Gentiles of the Soul: Maximus the Confessor on the Substructure and Transformation of the Human Passions," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4, no. 1 (1996): 57–85; "The Dialectics and Therapeutics of Desire in Maximus the Confessor," *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011): 425–451. More recently, Blowers has put Maximus in dialogue with contemporary ethical theory, see "Aligning and Reorienting the Passible Self: Maximus the Confessor's Virtue Ethics," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 26, no. 3 (2013): 333–350. For a more general account in the wider context of the *Philokalia*, a crucial text for the Eastern Christian tradition, see "Hope for the Passible Self: The Use and Transformation of the Human Passions in the Fathers of the Philokalia," in *The Philokalia: Exploring the Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality*, ed. Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 216–229.

44 See Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy*, 13–18.

45 Ibid., 69–70.

In later work, Blowers turns to Maximus's moral psychology and attempts to understand the philosophical apparatus available to Maximus to interpret human passibility. He observes the classic problem both in ancient philosophy and emerging early Christian discourse regarding the passions. Are they essential aspects of a human being or not? In reconstructing Maximus's doctrine of the passions, Blowers compares Maximus's view with earlier thinkers, such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, but does little to relate this to his prior work on Maximus's exegesis. In fact, Blowers claims that in *Ad Thalassium*, Maximus fails to provide a full treatise on the passions, despite Thalassius's long request for one in the *Introduction*.[46]

This begs the question: what should we expect a doctrinal treatise on the passions to look like? It is not by mistake that Thalassius sends Maximus two sets of questions—one ascetic, the other scriptural. Maximus participates in a long monastic tradition of handling questions about moral psychology in the context of biblical interpretation. Exegesis was not simply a literary quibble for the early Christians, even though giants like Origen and Augustine put the Christian tradition on surer philological and rhetorical footing. Rather, the Bible was the *locus* for discussing the problems, trials, needs, and questions of the Christian life. Therefore, it is misleading when Sherwood cautiously describes *Ad Thalassium* as a work of exegesis "only in an extended sense."[47] Dalmais and Bardy's[48] considerations of Maximus's exegesis in *Ad Thalassium* indicate a more myopic understanding of patristic biblical interpretation than Maximus himself would permit. Blowers inherits this critical situation and deals with the ascetic-spiritual material separately from the more exegetical features of Maximus's work.

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46 Blowers, "Gentiles of the Soul," 66. For Maximus's full list of questions, see *Introduction* (CCSG 7: 23–29).

47 Polycarp Sherwood, "Exposition and Use of Scripture in St. Maximus as Manifest in the Quaestiones ad Thalassium," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 24 (1958), 202–207. To which I respond, what definition of exegesis are we choosing? On the rediscovery and appreciation of patristic exegesis in modern scholarship, see Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Brian E. Daley, "Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable?" *Communio* 29, no. 1 (2002): 185–216; R. R. Reno and John O'Keefe, *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Hans Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis and the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

48 On the pessimistic views of Maximus's exegetical work see Dalmais, "Introduction," *Saint Maxime le Confesseur: Le mystère du salut*, 24. Gustave Bardy, "La litérature patristique des 'Quaestiones et Responsiones' sur l'Écriture Sainte," *Revue Biblique* 41 (1932): 210–236, 341–369, 515–537; 42 (1933): 14–30, 211–229, 328–352.

3 Exegetical Discernment of the Passions and Apatheia

Monastic concerns about the perfection of human passibility grew directly out of the early Christian attempt to do what Frances Young describes as "establishing reference." She writes: "For those who accept scriptural authority, the world of the text gives meaning to the world outside of the text. Conversely, the world outside the text enables the meaning inside the text to be discerned."[49] Exegetes bore the brunt of the burden to demonstrate that Scripture could be effective in this task of formation. More than establishing the meanings of words, exegetes had the larger task of showing how Scripture could refer to and inform the world around them. It was a matter of relating "two worlds"—Scripture and society. In other words, Christians had to prove that the "world of the text" and the "world outside the text" could speak to one another. Christian Scripture, in order to establish its authority, had to "dialogue" with the world, if it hoped to reform it to any degree.

Maximus required the right tools to make these scriptural passages speak to the situations he was asked to address. He had at his disposal strategies and concepts developed by ancient philosophy and mediated by prior Christian authors. Christians used Greek ideas to suit their purposes in articulating the Christian mystery and, in so doing, significantly changed them. Scripture was an essential instrument in this reconstruction. Early Christian discussion of the passions and its related term, *apatheia*, is a prime example of what Robert Wilken sees as the discernment of the early Church." [50] Philosophical ideas entered into Christian discourse through a process of what I call "exegetical discernment." These ideas were used to explain concepts in Scripture. Reciprocally, Scripture reformed aspects of Greek philosophical ideas to fit new Christian categories.

In what follows, I will outline an example of early Christian "exegetical discernment" of the passions and *apatheia*, describing the philosophical origins of these themes and their Christian development through biblical interpretation. To understand Maximus's project in *Ad Thalassium* requires this background. Maximus inherits this earlier tradition as well as the inherent tensions between philosophical anthropology and biblical data. The uniqueness of

49 Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 139.

50 Robert L. Wilken, "Maximus the Confessor on the Affections in Historical Perspective," in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 412–423. I use the word "passions" to designate the vicious emotional activity denoted by the Greek "παθή." I choose to leave the word "*apatheia*" untranslated to avoid confusion with the conventional English term "apathy," as the Greek word need not denote lack of feeling or cold indifference.

Maximus's position is best seen in light of his engagement with this background. The following discussion is aided by the work of Michel Spanneut, whose dedication to this topic and thorough examination of the doctrine of *apatheia* in Ancient Greek philosophy and early Christianity throughout his career has yet to be fully incorporated into scholarship.[51]

The origins of Christian consideration of the passions and its perfection as *apatheia* lie in Stoicism. The Stoics provided both a lens to examine the Christian narrative and a language to discuss Christian moral behavior. Advocating not just the moderation of vicious, passionate activity, but its eradication and replacement with positive emotions, Stoicism squared well with the moral injunction, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."[52] However, biblical language required significant revisions. For example, the psalmist's lyrical trope to "fear the Lord" presented at worst a muddle or at best a chance to rethink some of the Stoic program. Also, the combination of "love" as a biblical name of God and the erotic material found in the Song of Songs challenged pervasive attitudes, both pagan and Christian, about *eros*.

Let me be clear that, while Stoic themes, language, and concepts can be observed in the Confessor, particularly in his cosmology and theory of the *logoi*,[53] Stoicism was not a living school or stand-alone option in philosophy available to Maximus.[54] Furthermore, Christians did not belong to a single school.

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51 His two principal studies are id. "Apatheia ancienne, apatheia chrétienne. Ière partie: L'apatheia ancienne," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II, 36, no. 7 (1994): 4640–4717 and "L'apatheia chrétienne aux quatres premiers siècles," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 52 (2002): 165–302. See also *Le stoïcisme des pères de l'Église de Clément de Rome à Clément d'Alexandrie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969); "L'impact de l'apatheia stoicenne sur la pensée chrétienne jusqu'à saint Augustin in Cristianismo y aculturacion en tiempos del Imperio Romano," in *Cristianismo y aculturacion en tiempos del Imperio Romano*, ed. A. Gonzalez Blanco and J. M. Blazquez Martinez (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1990), 39–52; see also, Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Margaret Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

52 Mt 5:48.

53 See Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 73–93. Loudovikos, *Eucharistic Ontology*, 61–67; Demetrios Harper, "Αὐτεξούσιος: Activity as Assent or Co-actuality? Compatibilism, Natural Law, and the Maximian Synthesis," in *Maximus the Confessor as European Philosopher*, 272–283. See also his fuller treatment, id. *Analogy of Love: St. Maximus the Confessor and the Foundation of Ethics* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2020). Harper's analysis requires consideration. However, the publication of his book occurred during the final stages of the production of my current volume. I plan to address his arguments in a subsequent study.

54 On the survival of Stoic ideas and its interaction with Platonism and Aristotelianism in late antiquity, see Brad Inwood, "Stoicism," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in*

Rather, they were eclectic in their use of philosophy. Hence, Maximus's sources for this material were indirect and dependent upon this historical reception of the ascetic-exegetical tradition that I propose. If he were to know any Stoic theory directly, one possible theory is that Maximus received it through Nemesius of Emesa's *De natura hominis*.[55] Maximus is a key textual witness to the fourth-century bishop's text and is the first to attribute the work to Nemesius instead of Gregory of Nyssa.[56] However, Nemesius is critical of Stoic ideas, particularly on divine providence.[57] More importantly, Maximus's use of Nemesius is little more than doxographic. In many instances, Maximus cuts and pastes definitions from *De natura hominis* into his own work.[58] In *Ambiguum* 10, Maximus employs extensive borrowings and in some cases verbatim quotations from Nemesius to discuss the taxonomy of the passions.[59] Here, Thunberg argues that Maximus quotes from a florilegium of Nemesius. Maximus records Nemesius's binomy of the passions of pleasure (ἡδονή) and grief (λυπή), rather than replacing it with his own dialectic—pleasure (ἡδονή) and pain (ὀδύνη)—a theme he explores at length in *Ad Thalassium*.[60] The dates of the composition of *Ambigua* and *Ad Thalassium* overlap, as do many themes. However, the verbatim quoting and lack of amendment demonstrate that while Maximus uses Nemesius in his text, he does not necessarily use Nemesius to think. On the contrary, Maximus's open engagement with the exegetical and ascetical tradition is a more likely source for his ideas on the passions and *apatheia*.

4 The Passions and Human Apatheia

In Christian discourse, one of the lasting legacies of Stoicism is its doctrine of the passions. The Stoics consider the passions—disturbing states, feelings, actions, and experiences of evil—as things to be avoided. The novelty of their teaching lies in how they define, deal with, and argue for the elimination of the passions as necessary for human perfection. Stobaeus gives a standard

Late Antiquity vol. 1, ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 126–139.

55 Nemesius Emesenus, *De Natura Hominis*, ed. Moreno Moriani (Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1987).

56 Moreno Moriani, *La tradizione manoscritta del "De natura hominis" di Nemesio* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1981), 101–105.

57 R. W. Sharples, "Nemesius of Emesa and Some Theories of Divine Providence," *Vigiliae Christianae* 37, no. 2 (1983): 141–156.

58 As when, for example, Maximus cites Nemesius in a list of definitions of the will, cf. *ospuc.* (PG 91: 277C).

59 *ambig.* 10 (PG 91: 1196C–1200A).

60 Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 205 n215.

definition of the Stoic account of the passions that explains the essential elements and underpinnings of the theory:

> They [the Stoics] say that passion is an impulse which is excessive and disobedient to the dictates of reason, or a movement of the soul, which is irrational and contrary to nature; and that all passions belong to the soul's commanding-faculty.[61]

Here a passion is described as an irrational movement of the soul. The Stoic definition of soul affects the rest of the account of the passions. When Stobaeus says that "all passions belong to the soul's commanding-faculty," he is referring to what has been described as the Stoic "monistic psychology." The Stoics hold that the soul does not include distinct parts simultaneously in conflict.[62] All acts, virtuous or vicious, are expressions of the unitary commanding-faculty, similar to dispositional personality traits.[63] This is in direct contrast to the Platonic vision of the psyche.[64] Plato ascribes passionate behavior either to the body[65] or to the soul's desiring (ἐπιθυμητικόν) or irascible (θυμοειδές) parts.[66]

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61 Stobaeus 2.88,8–90,6, *LS* 65A (1.410–411). N.B.: I use the thematic numbering system (e.g. "65A") found in *The Hellenistic Philosophers* 2 vol., eds. A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). In parentheses, I put the volume number followed by page numbers: 1.410 = volume 1, page 410.

62 Galen's attempt to locate parts of the soul in the thought of Zeno is usually considered an attempt to valorize the mistaken position of Posidonius. See Galen, *On Hippocrates' and Plato's Doctrines* 5.6.34–7, *LS* 65I (1.413). For comment see *LS* (1.422). This is not to say that the Stoic account cannot accommodate moral conflict. Stoics describe it as a "fluttering" (πτοία), a rapid oscillation between differing judgments.

63 Sara C. Byers argues that Platonic and Stoic visions of the psyche are essentially similar ways to describe moral conflict in the human psyche. See ead., "Augustine on the 'Divided Self': Platonist or Stoic?," *Augustinian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007): 105–108. Byers's argument draws heavily from John M. Rist's article, "Plato Says We Have Tripartite Souls. If He is Right, What Can We Do About It?," in *Sophiēs Maiētores. Chercheurs de Sagesse: Hommage à Jean Pépin*, ed. Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, et al. (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1992), 103–124.

64 "The Stoics … found a way to introduce reason into the functioning of the animal soul without introducing the kind of psychological dualism. There is no trace for a 'divided self' in Stoic psychology," Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action*, 5. Long and Sedley agree with this view. See *LS* (1.321).

65 *Phaedo* 66C.

66 *Phaedrus* 246A–54E. Plato's terminology to describe the soul is not consistent, at times discussing "parts (μέρη)" *Republic* 442B, 444B, "forms (εἴδη)" *Timaeus* 69C, 77B, or "types (γένη)" *Republic* 441C, 443D, and 444B. J. M. Rist argues that the latter is Plato's normal term for talking about soul in the *Republic.* Instead of Platonic "parts of the soul," Rist emphasizes Plato's image of the city and compares talk about the soul with the treatment of

The rational part (λογιστικόν) must rein in these lower parts—like a good chariot driver at the helm of steeds—to achieve balance and to move forward. Since, for the Stoics, the passions do not belong to independent and lasting parts of the psyche, the Stoics advocate not for their moderation (μετριοπάθεια) but for their eradication (ἀπάθεια).

Hence, for the Stoics, passionate behavior consists of a mistaken judgment or a false opinion (δόξα) before a given impression. Helpful here is the Stoics' description of the four cardinal passions—fear (φόβος), desire (ἐπιθυμία), distress (λυπή), and pleasure (ἡδονή):

> Distress is an irrational contraction or a fresh opinion (δόξα) that something bad is present, at which people think it right to be contracted. Fear is an irrational shrinking aversion, or avoidance of an expected danger. Appetite is an irrational stretching, or pursuit of an expected good. Pleasure is an irrational swelling, or a fresh opinion that something good is present, at which people think it right to be swollen.[67]

Here, the relationship between judgment and action is worked out in some detail. Every human action coincides with the endorsement of a proposition. When a mistake occurs in judgment, the mind issues an imperative to avoid things thought wrongly to be fearful or to pursue things thought wrongly to be desirable or pleasurable.

Passions, then, are inaccurate judgments about the experiences of perceived goods and evils. Hence, virtue for the Stoics consists not in controlling such reactions, but in eliminating false thinking about them. The Sage represents the Stoic ideal. Insofar as he is rid of bad or incorrect judgments, the Sage is ἀπαθής, free of passionate states and behaviors. However, this does not mean that the Sage is absolutely deprived of emotional activity; such would be a corpse. On the contrary, the Sage possesses corollary εὐπαθείαι, or good emotions, such as joy (χαρά), caution (εὐλάβεια), or wish (βούλησις).[68] Correct thinking and action with respect to stimuli characterize these good emotions. For example,

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different types of citizens: "The soul is like a crowd of individuals searching for a common direction and feeling incomplete, inadequate, and lacking a sense of unity." See "Plato Says We Have Tripartite Souls," 110. For the ethical ramifications of this divided self, see id., *Real Ethics: Rethinking the Foundations of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 61–118.

67 Andronicus, *On Passions* 1, *LS* 65 B (1.411).

68 Diogenes Laertius 7.116, *LS* 65F (1.412). I translate εὐπαθείαι as "good emotions" and not "good passions" for clear contrast in English with the negative, vicious passions, "παθή."

joy is the true belief that something good has happened, and wish is a desire for a genuine good.

The Stoics take a "vitalist" position regarding substances like the soul and God.[69] Stoics conceive of the mind (ἡγεμονικόν) as a material substance, which extends through the body like ether or the tentacles of an octopus.[70] All of the activity of the mind—including cognition and action—is considered a unified psychosomatic event. Hence, passionate activity is coupled with physicalized sensations, such as the "avoidance" associated with fear and distress as a "contraction" (συστολή). Conversely, desire is expressed as a "swelling" (ἔπαρσις).[71] Because cognition is always an embodied phenomenon, even in the perfected state of the Stoic Sage, physical reactions can still occur without ceding to full-blown passionate activity. Stoics call these morally neutral phenomena προπάθειαι or *propassiones*. They are physical reactions or "bites," such as shuddering, crying, or blushing that, while empirically similar to passions, do not coincide with the false proposition and assent that constitutes a passion.[72] As we will see in Origen of Alexandria, this concept of *propassiones* is used to describe moral injunctions in Scripture as well as difficult passages regarding Christ and the saints.

Going back to Stobaeus's definition, he specifies that a passion is an irrational movement contrary to nature. He later makes a necessary qualification, saying "irrational" and "contrary to nature" are not to be understood in their conventional meaning. His distinction between "reason," the instrument by which man deliberates and acts, and "Right Reason" or "the will of Zeus" is helpful. Right Reason is to be understood as the pervasive presence of reason or *logos* in the universe. In Stoic cosmology, Right Reason or the will of Zeus

69 I use the term "vitalist" rather than "materialist" in the Cartesian sense of the term to describe the Stoic position that there are no immaterial substances.

70 Calcidius 220, *LS* 53G; Aetius 4.21.1–4, *LS* 53H. A clever image the Stoics use is the octopus. Having no bony skeleton, the animal expands or contracts in relation to stimuli in its environment. The divided tentacles of the octopus do not affect the essential unity of the soul as conceived by the Stoics. On this point, see *LS* (1.321).

71 Andronicus, *On Passions* 1, *LS* 65B (1.411).

72 Προπάθειαι or *propassiones* are generally considered features of imperial Stoicism—such as Seneca—and not of the early Stoicism described in the fragments of Zeno and Chrysippus. However, Margaret Graver argues rightly for the plausibility of their existence in the earlier Stoa on the basis of a close reading of texts of Philo. See ead., "Philo of Alexandria and the Origins of the Stoic Προπάθειαι," *Phronesis* 44, no. 4 (1999): 300–326. For an attempt to understand προπάθειαι in light of the Early Stoa, see Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action*, 176–181. Because of an awareness of original sin, certain early Christians, especially of the encratite sort, took the extreme position of the Cynics, who held that even these physicalized "bites" or first movements are evidence of a vicious mind.

governs the universe and permeates it. The human being's goal is "the smooth flow of life," which consists in acting and living according to this guiding reason:

> Therefore, living in agreement with nature comes to be the end, which is in accordance with the nature of oneself and that of the whole, engaging in no activity wont to be forbidden by the universal law, which is the right reason pervading everything and identical to Zeus, who is this director of the administration of existing things. And the virtue of the happy man and his good flow of life are just this: always doing everything on the basis of the concordance of each man's guardian spirit with the will of the administrator of the whole.[73]

For the Stoics, "acting contrary to nature" means contravening the will of Zeus. Thus, passionate behavior is "irrational" insofar as man misuses his own reason and is therefore out of sync with Right Reason, which guides the universe. As a result, all passionate activity is "contrary to nature," yet still "rational" because it occurs through the use of human rationality.[74]

Several consequences flow from the Stoic account of the passions. First, the rational character of all human action extends to his passionate behavior. Every passion is a deliberate act of assent issued by the mind. Such a claim demands a high level of human responsibility for one's actions. Second, even if these particular moments of passion instantiate a constant disposition toward irrational behavior, such a condition is not incurable. If the mind of Zeus and therefore "Right Reason" is knowable, then, with the right program or therapy, human moral perfection is possible, though rare. While *apatheia* describes the perfected human, it is not an end in itself for the Stoics.[75] *Apatheia* is not itself a virtue, but the ground of all virtuous action.[76] The Stoics do not set out

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73 Diogenes Laertius 7.87–9, *LS* 63C (1.395).

74 For relevant discussion, see Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action*, 41; Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 63–66.

75 Graver explains this well: "We should remember that the attainment of *apatheia* is not in itself the goal of personal development. For the founding Stoics the endpoint of progress was simply that one should come to understand the world correctly. The disappearance of the *pathē* comes with that changed intellectual condition: one who is in a state of knowledge does not assent to anything false, and the evaluations upon which the *pathē* depend really are false." *Stoicism and Emotion*, 210.

76 "L'*apatheia* n'est pas une vertu; elle est la disposition fondamentale qui les porte toutes." Spanneut, "Apatheia ancienne," 4658. The Cynics and Skeptics envisioned ἀπάθεια or ἀταραξία as a desirable attitude, both intellectual and moral, which is marked by almost total insensitivity and indifference toward externals. Ibid., 4663–4665.

to achieve *apatheia* or to "feel good," but, instead, to act in accordance with Right Reason.[77]

5 Divine Apatheia

Much more consequential for Christian thinking is God's status as *apathes*. In much of Greek philosophical thought, God is considered *apathes* insofar as he is unable to be moved or acted upon. However, the Stoics never use ἀπαθής to refer to God. Instead, they speak of God as Right Reason or the will of Zeus, who inheres in the universe and forms it and shapes it as a foundational principle:

> They [the Stoics] think that there are two principles of the universe, that which acts (τὸ ποιοῦν) and that which is acted upon (τὸ πάσχον). That which is acted upon is unqualified substance, i.e. matter (ὕλην); that which acts is the reason (λόγον) in it, i.e. God (θεόν). For this, since it is everlasting, constructs every single thing throughout all matter.[78]

God is an active principle (τὸ ποιοῦν) and therefore lacks passivity. However, for the Stoics, God inheres in matter as a physical substance, similar to how the soul is coextensive with the body. Insofar as God is a material substance, he also is subject to being acted upon. Hence, paradoxically for the Stoics, God both is and is not ἀπαθής. For this reason, the Stoics never use *apatheia* in reference to God, but always use it as a moral category for man.[79] Also, the Stoics define human virtue as "consistent character" (ὁμολογούμενη διάθεσις). Long and Sedley note that ὁμολογία is "ideally suited to capture the essence of Stoic virtue, since its linguistic form (*homo-logia*) is interpretable as 'harmony of (or

77 Central to this claim is the idea of a true proposition. "I am happy" is a true proposition insofar as I am obtaining happiness. Stobaeus recounts a helpful distinction. "Yet they say that while happiness is set up as a target (σκόπος), the end (τέλος) is to obtain happiness." Stobaeus, 2.77, 16–27 *LS* 63A (1.394). Long and Sedley explain the distinction between σκόπος and τέλος in these terms: "Happiness is an objectively specifiable state of affairs, the same for all, but our end as individuals is 'to be happy' by getting happiness for ourselves. This seems to be the point of the rather strained distinction between happiness as 'target' and being happy as 'end'. 'Being happy' will be the incorporeal predicate which signifies someone's possession of happiness: We aim at happiness in order that 'being happy' can truly be predicated of ourselves." *LS* (1.400).

78 Diogenes Laertius 7.134, *LS* 44B (1.268).

79 Spanneut fails to grasp this point about the materiality of God. "Apatheia ancienne," 4646–4647; id. "L'apatheia chrétienne," 166–169.

with) reason.'"[80] That is why Chrysippus claimed a wise man could be as virtuous as Zeus.[81] Strictly speaking, ἀπάθεια entails acting consistently with reason, not being like God.

This distinction is important because, for most Greek philosophers, God is consistently ἀπαθής.[82] Divine *apatheia* in this sense is not a moral but an ontological category. God, as an immaterial mover distinct from creation, is not susceptible to change. For Plato, to be altered (ἀλλοιοῦσθαι) happens least to the best of things. God, the summit of perfection, is thus by nature impassable, that is, unable to be changed or acted upon.[83] Early Christians regularly used this metaphysical notion in Plato, since he likewise posits an affinity between the human soul and God. This claim echoes Genesis's affirmation that humans are made in God's image and likeness.[84] However, for Christians, the soul is not naturally immortal. The human being instantiated this divine likeness through virtuous acts and, through this gradual perfection, were gifted by grace with immortality.

6 Christian Apatheia in Clement and Origen: the Problem of Desire

Highlighting the differences between Stoic and Platonic divine *apatheia* is important before dealing with Christian literature. Following their Jewish exegetical ancestor Philo,[85] the Greek Fathers accepted the Stoic concept of *apatheia* as a moral category for man. Likewise, they accepted the Platonic understanding of *apatheia* as an ontological quality of God.[86] The Incarnation fuses these

80 *LS* (1.383).

81 He also claimed that virtue could be lost. This was a debated point between Chrysippus and Cleanthes. The latter believed that the wise man could never be shaken from his moral disposition. Cf. Plutarch *On Common Conceptions* 1062–1063b *LS* 61T; 61U (1.382). For comment see *LS* (1.385).

82 Spanneut, "Apatheia ancienne," 4647.

83 *Republic* 380E–381C; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, book 12, 1073a 11.

84 Plato discusses ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ as a human ideal four times throughout his works: *Republic* 10.613B; *Theaeteus* 176A–B; *Timaeus* 90A; *Laws* 716B. On the relationship of this concept and its development within Christian tradition, see J. M. Rist, *What Is Truth?*, 29ff.

85 I have chosen to focus only on Christian authors. For Philo's incorporation of Stoicism into his exegesis, see Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 102–108. She argues that Philo's concept of προπάθειαι is plausibly derived from the early Stoa. For Philo's influence on Christian exegetes, see David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Mark Sheridan *Language for God in the Patristic Tradition*, 61–78.

86 Michel Spanneut, "L'apatheia divine. Des anciens aux pères de l'église," in *Historiam perscrutari: miscellanea di studi offerti al prof. Ottorino Pasquato*, ed. Mario Maritano (Rome: Editrice LAS, 2002), 637–652.

two categories, since Christ is both ontologically ἀπαθής insofar as his divine nature is not susceptible to change, and morally ἀπαθής insofar as he is free of ethical imperfections. Here, *apatheia* shifts from terrestrial perfection, as in the Stoic view, to a divine vocation through the Christian appropriation of the term.

With Clement of Alexandria, the Stoic account of the passions enters unequivocally into Christian discourse, although prior apologists, such as Justin Martyr and Athenagoras, adumbrate it.[87] Clement's understanding of the passions and *apatheia* unfolds on two related levels: 1) the divine *apatheia* of God the Father and the incarnate Christ; 2) the human *apatheia* of the perfected Christian.

For Clement, God is ἀπαθής by nature.[88] Clement intends divine *apatheia* in a Stoic sense, emphasizing its moral qualities: God is not irascible (ἄθυμος) and is without desire (ἀνεπιθύμητος).[89] Thus, he is not subject to passions as the Stoics understand them. It follows that Christ, while assuming passible flesh, remains ἀπαθής while on Earth.[90] As such, Clement considers Christ totally free (ἀπόλυτος) of human passions. Even in his fleshly existence, Christ is elevated to the state of *apatheia*. The identification of Christ with *apatheia* figures into Clement's concept of the perfect Christian. Clement affirms that the perfect Christian or gnostic[91] is likewise *apathes*.[92] However, the Christian is not naturally so; he comes to *apatheia* through ascetic effort perfected by grace.[93] Clement considers Christian *apatheia* to be the restoration of divine likeness.[94]

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87 For Justin, see *I apol.* 57.2; 10.2; *II apol.* 1.2; *Dial.* 45.4, 46.7; 124.4. For Athenagoras, see *Leg.* 31.4 cf. Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 246–247.

88 *str.* 6.9.72–73 (SC 268: 206–210); 7.2.7 (SC 428: 54–56); 7.2.13 (SC 428: 68–70).

89 Ibid. 4.23.151 (GCS 15: 315).

90 *paed.* 1.2.4 (SC 70: 114).

91 The term "gnostic" is a technical term used by Clement to mean someone who has knowledge of the true God, and not the heretical, syncretic position adopted in the second century.

92 Following Philo, Clement does hold to μετριόπαθεια as a sort of intermediate stage, but considers *apatheia* the divine vocation of all Christians. See Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 252–254.

93 *str.* 7.3.13 (SC 428: 68–70). See Spanneut, ibid., 255–256.

94 *paed.* 1.2.4; *str.* 4.23.147 (GCS 15: 313); 7.14.84 (SC 428: 256–260). Lilla argues that Clement is dependent on the Platonic concept of ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ; see Salvatore Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 84–117. While Clement is certainly aware of this theme in Plato, one need not see Clement as borrowing a Platonic concept for three reasons. First, divine likeness is just as much biblical as it is Platonic. If the early Christian authors talk about man's divine likeness, it is because of Genesis; Platonic ὁμοίωσις is acceptable because it is thought to

Clement adopts Stoic terminology and concepts to teach the Christian life through his practical exegesis. For him, *apatheia* is a disposition prescribed by the Gospel.[95] Nevertheless, Clement modifies the pure Stoic framework with lasting consequences for later Christian writers. First, Clement upholds as a postulate the Platonic concept of divine *apatheia* even in the case of the incarnate Christ. This departs from the Stoics. Their pantheist vision of God coextensive with material creation renders divine *apatheia* impossible. Clement is consistent on this matter. Second, for the Stoics, the Sage is ἀπαθής. However, this state is not an end in itself (τέλος). Rather, the goal of human life is to act virtuously. In contrast, Clement sees *apatheia* as the content of divine likeness, affirmed in Genesis. A related consequence is that Scripture provides Christians regular contact with a full-blooded model of perfect human living in the person of Christ. For the Stoics, Sages were in short supply. Third, *apatheia* is not solely a human achievement for Clement. The Stoics advocate a rigorous program to train the mind in order to rid oneself of the passions. In Clement, we see the beginning elements of Christian training (ἄσκησις) as necessary in preparation for virtue, yet insufficient for the acquisition of *apatheia*. Such perfection is ultimately a gift from God that requires the cooperation of the human will, for God works with willing hearts.[96]

Turning to specific passions, Clement demonstrates further creativity in shaping Stoic categories to meet this new Christian context. Clement is aware of the four cardinal passions—fear, grief, desire, and pleasure—and describes them in Stoic terms as disobedient to reason.[97] In particular Clement bends Stoic austerity regarding desire to accommodate Christian love. This is distinct from the Stoic view in which love—specifically ἔρως—is a passion related to

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correspond to biblical evidence. Second, Plato considers the human soul naturally immortal, whereas Christians tend to consider ὁμοίωσις the acquisition of eternal life. The Platonist does not have to worry about this, for he only has to make the soul more god-like, not secure its immortality. Third, Clement discusses divine ἀπάθεια as the absence of vicious passions, respecting the Stoics' consistent use of the term in a moral sense. Platonic divine ἀπάθεια is understood metaphysically; God is not subject to change. Clement prefers the Stoic sense because he describes divine *apatheia* along moral lines, in order to set up a "target" for man and the goal of restoring divine likeness. See Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 252–254.

95 *str.* 7.3.14 (SC 428: 70–72); 7.11.64 (SC 428: 202–204). Cf. Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 252.

96 *q.d.s.*, 21.1–2 (GCS 17: 173). For relevant comment, see John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 167. More generally on the relationship between ἄσκησις and *apatheia* in Clement, see Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 255–259.

97 *paed.* 1.13.101 (SC 70: 290).

desire and must be eradicated. For Clement, love is both the knowledge that permits progress in the Christian life and the ground upon which his version of *apatheia* is built. The perfected Christian is marked by a double love of God and of neighbor.[98] However, Clement shares the Stoic and general cultural distrust of desire, as evidenced by a preference for ἀγαπή to refer to love and not ἔρως.[99] He describes the perfection of the Christian not as desire, but as a relation and knowledge, arguing that the perfected Christian or "gnostic" who has acquired divine charity already possesses the object of desire and therefore has no need of these drives to reach his goal.[100]

His understanding of love creates several problems. First, it is inconceivable for love to exist without desire. Second, desire is a basic feature of the human psyche and a prerequisite to movement. Essential to the Stoic account of the passions is not simply bad feelings, but moral motivation and human activity. While the Stoics label excessive desire as vicious, they nevertheless recognize that human action occurs through the desires or appetite (ὄρεχις) of the human psyche. The Stoic psyche is structured such that reason always acts upon appetite either virtuously or viciously. What they did not believe was that these welled up from the non-rational part of the soul. Further, Clement is ready to admit that Christ, who is *apathes*, nevertheless exercises sympathy and is born on Earth to extend himself in love toward the human race.[101] It would seem that the generative activity and self-extension of God's love for humankind should be present in Clement's account of human love for God. Hence, Clement is faced with a difficulty. Desire is observable in human nature. Drawing from Scripture, one must recognize generally that desire precedes the acquisition of its object. More specifically, love is an essential feature of human progress toward God. Yet, as he attempts to combine Stoic severity toward eros with a safer version of Platonic desire, Clement's hollow concept of desire-free love is insufficient to describe how one gets from point A to point B.

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98 Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 258–259.

99 On the concept of eros in the Greco-Roman world and its relationship to Christian thought, see Kathy L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). See esp. 247–272 for Clement's stringent prohibition of eros in his sexual ethics. For Clement's failed attempt to reconcile Stoicism with Platonism and his fear of eros, see Rist, *What Is Truth?*, 44–53.

100 *str.* 6.9.73 (SC 446: 208–210).

101 *q.d.s.* 37.2 (GCS 17: 184).

Origen demonstrates extensive knowledge of Stoicism in his writings, often using Stoic technical terms in his treatises and discourses.[102] For example, in *On First Principles*, he affirms that all movement originates from the assent (συγκαταθέσις) issued by the mind (ἡγεμονικόν).[103] In his biblical exegesis, he uses Stoic moral thought as a hermeneutical tool to parse events in Scripture and the actions of its characters to unpack moral imperatives and to interpret difficult passages relating to Christ, rendering them understandable and worthy of imitation. Origen repeats Clement's use of the Stoic account in several ways. As with Clement, Origen maintains that the elimination of the passions (*apatheia*) is the mark of the perfected Christian. He likewise explains beatitude as dispassion of soul (μακαριότης δὲ ψυχῆς ἀπάθεια).[104] He also shares with Clement the idea that *apatheia* is a divine quality possessed by the incarnate Christ. He teaches that *apatheia* is ultimately a gift bestowed. A Christian is ἀπαθής only "in the hands of the Lord."[105]

Origen employs the Stoic account of προπάθειαι to discuss opaque moral injunctions in Scripture and difficult passages relating to Christ.[106] Προπάθειαι or *propassiones* describes an involuntary physical reaction—such as shuddering or blushing—but is not in itself subject to moral judgment.[107] In his comment on Psalm 4:5, "Be angry (ὀργίζεσθε) and do not sin,"[108] Origen is struck by the psalmist's imperative to cede to anger and concludes that Scripture's use of the word "anger" covers a wider field of meaning; it includes both the involuntary feeling (ἀπροαιρετικὸς προπάθεια) present in the provoked and the actual voluntary desire (προαιρετικὸς ὄρεξις) to respond to wrongdoers.[109]

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102 On Origen's knowledge of Stoicism, see Henry Chadwick, "Origen, Celsus, and the Stoa," *Journal of Theological Studies* 48 (1947): 34–49; John M. Rist, "Beyond Stoic and Platonist: A Sample of Origen's Treatment of Philosophy (Contra Celsum: 4.62–70)," in *Platonismus und Christentum: Festschrift für Heinrich Dörrie*, ed. Horst-Dieter Blume and Friedhelm Mann (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1983), 228–238.

103 *princ.* 3.1.3–4 (SC 268: 222–226).

104 *Sel. in Ps.* 1 (PG 12: 1085B).

105 *Hom. in Ier.* Fgt. 30 (GCS 6: 214); cf. Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 262.

106 On Origen's discussion of προπάθειαι, see Richard A. Layton, "Propatheia: Origen and Didymus on the Origin of the Passions," *Vigiliae Christianae* 54, no. 3 (2000): 262–282; Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 102–108; Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 205–207.

107 Though there is some evidence that the concept is present already in the Early Stoa, see Graver, ibid.

108 *Sel. in Ps.* 4 (PG 12: 1141D–1144D). Origen discusses this passage with the same Stoic framework and technical vocabulary as when Paul quotes this verse in Ephesians. See J. A. F. Gregg, "Documents: The Commentary of Origen upon the Epistle to the Ephesians," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 3, no. 10 (1902): 420.

109 See Layton, "Propatheia: Origen and Didymus," 266.

He explains that the psalmist's imperative is a concession not to anger, but to προπάθεια—the first physical stirrings before the incitement of anger—which is not in itself sinful.[110] Here, Origen demonstrates a Stoic approach to these first movements, considering them benign physical reactions.

Προπάθεια also figures into Origen's interpretive strategy when dealing with certain scriptural passages concerning Christ's divine and human natures, in particular in the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, an event central to Maximus's later defense of Christ's human will. According to Origen, some sects used Christ's grief before his Passion as evidence against his divinity. Wishing to preserve Christ's divine nature *qua* impassable, he points out that in the Gospel of Matthew it is written that Jesus "began to be grieved" in the garden.[111] Based on the word "began" (*coepit*), Origen considers this moment in the Gospel an instance of προπάθεια, distinguishing between the morally neutral trembling that precedes a passion and the passion itself.[112] He also uses προπάθεια to affirm Christ's genuine human nature, for Origen considers Christ's προπάθειαι to be evidence of Christ's human mind and human flesh capable of feeling these emotions.[113]

Origen has been accused of inconsistency in his treatment of these προπάθειαι. At times, he makes a distinction between προπάθεια and παθή as above. At other times, he muddles this distinction, considering the stirrings themselves to be passions and therefore inherently evil.[114] In a famous passage in *On First Principles*, he discusses the passions as "thoughts that proceed from the heart," where "bad things are suggested to our heart" and occasion "agitation and incitement that provokes us to do good or bad things."[115] Here, he describes these first stirrings as morally vicious temptations.

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110 Clement also insists that anger has no part in the Christian life. He uses the verse to extol the Christian not to assent to the impression (μὴ συγκατατίθεσθαι τῇ φαντασίᾳ) but does not make the terminological distinction to interpret the troubling passage like Origen. Cf. *str.* 5.5.28. In one instance, Clement concedes that a spiritual father can get angry, in order to quicken the repentance of his pupils. See *q.d.s.* 41 (GCS 17: 187). Origen's student Didymus the Blind expands the semantic range of προπάθειαι to include not just involuntary reactions, but voluntary thoughts. See Layton, "Propatheia: Origen and Didymus," 271–282.

111 Mt. 26:37.

112 *Comm. in Matt.* 92 (GCS 38: 205–206). See Layton, "Propatheia: Origen and Didymus," 268–270. See also Graver, who is generally good, although she anachronistically claims that Origen aims to confute "Arian Christology" in this passage. See Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 102–108.

113 Graver, ibid., 106.

114 For this view, see Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 343–357.

115 *princ.*, 3.2.4 (SC 268: 168–174).

Origen's distinction between genuine προπάθειαι and "bad thoughts" or temptations is consistent. He regularly separates προπάθειαι from passions in reference to perfect moral activity. His commentary on Psalm 4:5 maintains this distinction, because the imperative, "Be angry and do not sin," is a command to morally upright action. In the case of Christ, who himself is ἀπαθής, Origen likewise maintains the difference between first stirrings and the passion itself. When Origen talks about temptation, as above, he is referring to fallen and therefore imperfect humanity. Origen's view is not the result of his own intellectual conflation, but the "muddled" state of affairs of human existence. In the fallen world, there is regularly no distinction between προπάθεια and παθή. Both the physicalized sensation and the morally vicious assent collide into one another and appear as one event. Indeed, for the Stoic, the "weak" soul habitually commits moral errors and, in the presence of these affective stirrings, often concedes to passion. In the Christian context, the soul is not only "weak" but fallen and therefore susceptible to habitual sin. Origen's concept of "bad thoughts" expresses an awareness of the effects of original sin on human nature; even the benign "bites" of the Stoics are already complicit in concupiscent, passionate activity, and therefore held morally suspect. As we will see later, Origen's severe scrutiny of incipient stirrings of passion will figure largely into Evagrius's monastic teaching, which served as one of Maximus's principal influences.

Unlike Clement, Origen considers eros a divine attribute. In the *Prologue* of his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, he concludes—if only cautiously—that God can be called *eros*: "I do not think one could be blamed if one were to call God Eros."[116] Origen bases his argument on Scripture, working from the letters of John that discuss "love" as a name of God. Hence, Scripture leads Origen to revise Stoic *apatheia* to include a more Platonized Christian concept of ἔρως as a legitimate good and a necessary motivating force in human action and movement toward the Divine.[117]

7 Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius: Using Emotions Well

Maximus openly engages with the thought of Gregory of Nyssa, whom he both quotes as a source and whose conceptual problems he attempts to remedy. Gregory figures strongly into Maximus's opening exposition on the good use of the passions in *Question 1* of *Ad Thalassium*. For Gregory, some of the salient

116 *Comm. in cant.* Prologue 2.34 (SC 375: 116).

117 See Rist, *What Is Truth?*, 57–60.

features of earlier Christian thought on *apatheia* remain pertinent, strongly conditioned by his interpretation of the opening chapters of Genesis. He sees Adam as ἀπαθής and explains Adam's lapse as an entanglement of the soul in passions (ἐμπαθής).[118] The goal of human life is the restoration of the original dispassionate state of humanity. Gregory likewise shares the conviction of Clement and Origen that *apatheia* is how man most resembles God. Adam is created "ἀπαθής by nature in imitation of the ἀπαθής."[119]

Gregory's further reflection on the Genesis account of creation brings about specific questions regarding the origin of the passions. He interprets the two accounts of man's creation as two distinct moments. In the first account of the creation of human beings, humanity enjoys a more angelic mode of existence, while in the second creation account, humanity is divided into male and female.[120] God, foreseeing Adam's fall, economically provides this second creation. According to Gregory, the passions attach themselves to man in this second sexed state. Gregory's double creation works the Genesis narrative into a conundrum: Whose fault is the origin of the passions? The passions that quicken Adam's fall belong somehow to his original constitution—a decision not his own but God's. At the same time, man is the owner of his passions, insofar as the passions are a consequence of his original fault.

Gregory repeats this problem in *On the Soul and Resurrection*. In the dialogue between Gregory and his sister Macrina at her deathbed, Macrina denies both positions: passions neither originate in the soul nor are exterior to it.[121] Williams and others have argued that Gregory seeks a "third way" out of the problem.[122] In the dialogue, Macrina suggests that impulses (ὁρμαί) are exterior yet essential characteristics of human existence. Using metaphor, Gregory

118 *or. catech.* 6.10. (SC 453: 180); cf. Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 272.

119 Spanneut, ibid.

120 Cf. *hom. opif.* 16–17 (PG 44: 177B–192A); 22 (PG 44: 204A–209C). Gregory's account of double creation reframes the Genesis narrative to exclude Origen's version of double creation that postulates the idea of pre-existent souls. On Gregory's attempt to correct Origen's account of double creation, see Brooks Otis, "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958): 109–110.

121 *anim. et res.* (GNO 3.3: 33–42).

122 Rowan Williams, "Macrina's Deathbed Revisited: Gregory of Nyssa on Mind and Passion," in *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity: Essays in Tribute to George Christopher Stead*, ed. Lionel R. Wickham, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 227–246; Both Gregory's material and Williams's argument are critically analyzed in Claudio Moreschini, *I Padri Cappadoci: storia, letteratura, teologia* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2008), 219–223. See also J. Warren Smith, *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa* (New York: Crossroad, 2004).

writes that these impulses are sown into man's soul like seeds in a field.[123] Among the saplings of impulse, passions or bad judgments shoot up in the field of the soul. Instead of uprooting the whole field, humans must cultivate these saplings. Extending his reflection, Gregory discusses elsewhere the possibility of the transformation of passions: "anger into courage, terror into caution, fear into obedience, hatred into aversion to vice, the power of love into the desire for what is truly beautiful."[124]

Williams describes Gregory's position as a middle ground between Platonism and Stoicism.[125] On the one hand, Gregory holds that for humans the divine likeness to be acquired is equivalent to ἀπαθής. Therefore, the passions must be eliminated from human existence. On the other hand, reflecting on Genesis, he argues that desire—in a corrupted form due to original sin—is tethered to man from the beginning.[126] Desire is also a necessary force that propels man. Without it, the soul is deprived of what can move it toward God.[127] In this way, he accepts Origen's treatment of ἔρως, allowing for a Platonized Christian concept of desire in a generally Stoic framework. This notion of desire is evident in Gregory's account of *epekstasis*, where he considers human perfection as continual progress toward the divine, moved by unsatiated desire for the infinite God.[128] Because he considers passions, like desire, as nonrational states linked to man's constitution from the moment of his creation, Gregory begins to modify the Stoic position. *Apatheia* does not consist in the elimination of παθή, but in their transformation and purification. In this sense, transfigured passions, similar to Stoic εὐπάθειαι, play a role in man's return to the divine state as ἀπαθής.[129] However, Gregory is unable to incorporate the contrasting visions of the Platonic and Stoic psyche. For him, these incipient

123 *anim. et res.* (GNO 3.3: 42–47). See also Williams, "Macrina's Deathbed Revisited," 237–239.

124 *hom. opif.* 18 (PG 44: 193B–C).

125 Williams, "Macrina's Deathbed Revisited," 238–239.

126 Frances Young sees Gregory's anthropological views based more on the contemporary science of his age than on the Bible. See ead., "Adam and Anthropos: A Study of the Interaction of Science and the Bible in Two Anthropological Treatises of the Fourth Century," *Vigiliae Christianae* 37, no. 2 (1983): 110–140.

127 *anim. et res.* (GNO 3.3: 45–47); cf. Spanneut "L'apatheia chrétienne," 273.

128 For the classic exposition of this theme in Gregory, see Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique; essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Éditions Montaigne, 1953), 291–307. See also Moreschini, *I Padri Capadocci*, 327–346; Rist, *What Is Truth?*, 175. For a detailed exploration of this theme in Gregory and Maximus, see Paul M. Blowers, "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of 'Perpetual Progress'," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46, no. 2 (1992): 151–171.

129 "Dégagées du mal, elles sont transfigurées, sublimes et concourent à une 'disposition unique,' 'l'activité verteuse unique.'" Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 274–275.

passions are ultimately non-rational. While they can be incorporated into his corrected human vision of the human soul, they remain extrinsic to humanity's original constitution. Ultimately, Gregory is able to recognize the problem but cannot adequately account for it.

Among Gregory's near contemporaries, Evagrius Ponticus developed an extensive theory of the passions and is among the strongest proponents in the Greek tradition of *apatheia* as the goal of Christian life. The reception of his thought, however, has been debated and has influenced thought on his relationship to Maximus. Already in antiquity, Jerome criticized Evagrius's position on *apatheia*, calling it the property "of God and stones."[130] In the twentieth century, many scholars considered Evagrius a philosophical systematician and his work incompatible with the Christian Gospel.[131] Paradoxically, a vast amount of Evagrius's work was rediscovered in the last century, particularly his commentaries on Scripture.[132] These works show him more entrenched in Scripture than previously thought and skilled as an exegete.[133] His regular use of Scripture affects his understanding of the passions and *apatheia*. He maintains that biblical exegesis aims to lead people from vice to virtue. Hence, for Evagrius, "exegesis and ascetical progress are inextricably intertwined."[134] Maximus develops his thought within this integrated monastic tradition.

Evagrius recasts the Stoic doctrine of the passions according to the demands of the Gospel in several ways. First, *apatheia* manifests itself in the life of the Christian, not as the achievement of the individual monk but as a gift given by God, "the physician of souls," who treats, purges, and shrivels the passions.[135]

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130 *Ep.* 133.3 (CSEL 56: 246).

131 Notably Antoine Guillemont, *Les 'Képhalaia Gnostica' di Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de L'Origenisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962); id. *Un philosophe au désert: Évagre le Pontique* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique, 2004); Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Pontikus," *Zeitschrift für Askese und Mystik* 14 (1939): 31–47.

132 For example, the *Antirrhetikos* (CPG 2434), *Scholia on Job* (CPG 2458), *Scholia on Ecclesiastes* (CPG 2459), *Scholia on Proverbs* (CPG 2456), *On the "Our Father"* (CPG 2461).

133 Several *scholia* show that he had more than a casual interest in Hebrew and likely used Origen's *Tetrapla* in order to make philological comparisons. He also developed a strong Christological interpretation of the Old Testament, most notably in the *Scholia on Ecclesiastes*, where he considers the narrating preacher of the book to be Christ. On Evagrius's exegesis, see Augustine Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 100–132; On Evagrius's use of Scripture in the spiritual life, see Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

134 Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer*, 62–63.

135 "But observe how the Physician of souls here through almsgiving heals our irascibility, through prayer purges the intellect, and through fasting causes desire to atrophy." *On*

Also, like Clement and Origen before him, Evagrius relates *apatheia* to charity; love is the fruit of *apatheia*.[136] Evagrius, *pace* Jerome, does not consider *apatheia* to be stone-faced insensitivity, and neither would the Stoics. Rather, he considers joy a sign of *apatheia*.[137]

Evagrius develops Origen in his consideration of προπάθειαι as morally suspect bad thoughts.[138] He lists eight thoughts (λογισμοί) that most often attack monks: gluttony, fornication, greed, grief, anger, listlessness, vanity, and pride.[139] Like the Stoic cardinal passions, Evagrius considers these thoughts to be the most generic; other bad thoughts flow from them. Also like the Stoics, Evagrius considers these thoughts involuntary. However, man must neither let them linger nor let them stir up full-blown passions.[140] Evagrius's use of the word "*logismoi*" indicates that these principal passions are themselves already rational activity, insofar as they exist in the mind. In the context of this teaching on thoughts, Evagrius unfolds the path toward *apatheia*. Unlike the Stoics, who teach that virtue is an all-or-nothing proposition,[141] Evagrius teaches that *apatheia* is attained in degrees, and progress consists in playing these bad thoughts off each other. For example, if certain moral progress has been made, the monk is especially vulnerable to vanity. Evagrius suggests conjuring up bad thoughts of fornication to quicken humility.[142]

Evagrius also differs in his account of εὐπάθειαι. He goes beyond the Stoics to consider hard-heartedness (ἀναισθησία) to be a vice.[143] He gives ample space to positive forms of grief (λυπή), which the Stoics consider a cardinal passion. He highly esteems compunction (κατάνυξις), a piercing sense of humility for one's sins accompanied by tears;[144] it is the virtue that permits one to see God. Evagrius draws the term from Isaiah 6, where Isaiah describes his vision of the Holy of Holies and undergoes a purification (κατάνυξις in LXX).[145] Furthermore,

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Thoughts 3 (SC 438: 160–162). Interestingly, Evagrius describes physical practices performed by the monk. However, the practices themselves do not produce the healing; the cure remains ultimately a gift.

136 *Praktikos* 81 (SC 171: 670).

137 *On Thoughts* 28 (SC 438: 252–254); cf. *De oratione* 15, 23, 62, 93, 153.

138 See Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 358–371.

139 For their description, see *Praktikos* 6–14 (SC 171: 506–534).

140 Ibid., 80, 6. Cf. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, 359.

141 Though there are significant steps one can take toward or away from virtue, the Stoics hold that virtue is acquired only with great difficulty.

142 Ibid., 30–31. Cf. Sorabji, 360–361.

143 *On Thoughts* 11 (SC 438: 188–192).

144 *Praktikos* 57 (SC 171: 634).

145 "Surely, indeed, when you realize your limitations, you will find compunction pleasant and you will deem yourself miserable, as Isaiah did, because being impure and being in

Evagrius describes πένθος, or sorrow for one's sins, in a Pauline way. It is a godly grief that quickens repentance.[146] He sees compunction as intimately bound with compassion (συμπάθεια), where "compunction integrally opens up the heart to others and to the whole created world."[147] Compassion is a virtue exhibited first by God[148] and essential for the building up of the soul.[149]

8 Conclusion

These Greek Fathers prior to Maximus found the Stoics useful in explaining the rigors of Christian moral action proposed by the Gospel. While borrowing amply from Stoic thought for their exegesis, they used Scripture to revise the Stoic doctrine in three fundamental ways. First, *apatheia* becomes for Christians the content of divine likeness. Restoring the divine likeness entails becoming ἀπαθής. This teleological aspect of *apatheia* is a development beyond the Stoics, for they consider *apatheia* not an end in itself but the ground of all virtuous action. Second, *apatheia* is fundamentally a gift from God and not a human achievement. Ascetic effort is, however, necessary to receive this gift. Third, Christianity admits a wider range of what Stoics would consider εὐπάθειαι: love—both in its agapic and erotic forms—and grief associated with repentance. They also accept the Platonic Christian understanding of desire as a prerequisite for movement toward the divine. Maximus inherits the reciprocal and dynamic relationship between Stoic-influenced asceticism and exegesis demonstrated by these authors, as well as creative developments in his own ascetical thought. This historical background helps to understand Maximus's exegetical strategy and the prominent role the passions and the ascetic life play in *Ad Thalassium*.

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the midst of such a people, adversaries, you dare to present yourself to the Lord Sabaoth." *De oratione* 79 (trans. Sinkewicz 201). For an exploration of these themes, see Kevin Corrigan and Gregory Yuri Glazov, "Compunction and Compassion: Two Overlooked Virtues in Evagrius of Pontus," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 22, no. 1 (2014): 61–77, esp. 68ff.

146 "A smelting-furnace purifies base silver; a godly sadness purifies a soul caught in sins." *De octo spiritibus malitiae* 5.19. Cf. 2 Cor 7:8–11. (trans. Sinkewicz, 83). On the notion of "godly grief" in the Fathers, see John Gavin, "The Grief Willed by God," *Gregorianum* 91, no. 3 (2010): 427–442. Gavin argues that, for Evagrius, sadness [λυπή] is a thought or temptation in all cases since it comes from the attack of a demon (437). However, Evagrius prefers terms for grief like κατάνυξις and πένθος to indicate the godly.

147 Corrigan and Glazov, "Compunction and Compassion," 69.

148 *De oratione*, 63.

149 "Repentance and humility restore the soul; compassion and gentleness strengthen it." *Ad monachos* 53.

CHAPTER 2

The Passions in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*: the Ascetic Unity of the Biblical Questions

Abstract

This chapter focuses on *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* and argues for the thematic unity of the *Introduction* and *Question 1* with the rest of the work. Maximus employs exegetical discernment to explain the origin of the passions. Likewise, questions about human passibility condition his exploration of the scriptural questions in the remainder of the work. Further, at the heart of *Question 1* is the value of human passibility, a theme that Maximus develops in the later biblical questions. Human passibility can be used for salvific ends. Maximus specifies that Christ's redemptive work on the Cross functions to redeem human passibility, granting the possibility of *apatheia* to every Christian through sacramental participation and ascetic struggle. I further show how Maximus's account of human emotion develops out of his personal monastic experience and confrontation with the fundamental scriptural difficulty regarding the emotions of God and the saints in the Bible.

Maximus continues the interplay between the monastic world and biblical exegesis in *Ad Thalassium*. In this light, we can confront a central tension within the work: the relationship between Maximus's direct considerations of ascetic material in the *Introduction* and *Question 1* and the remaining scriptural difficulties. Already Photius considers the first section an ascetical treatise distinct from the scriptural questions.[1] A close reading of this work reveals at least three

1 Photius, *Bibliotheca*, Tome 3, 156B, lines 25–35. (*Collection des universités de France*, 158, ed. René Henry, 80). Photius gives us the earliest bibliographical testimony to *Ad Thalassium*, while Eriugena's Latin translation (864–866) is our earliest manuscript evidence. Photius accurately summarizes the material in the *Introduction* as well as the difficulties in Scripture dealt with in the work. Photius heavily criticizes Maximus's rhetorical ability. The *Bibliotheca* dates to the early ninth century. For a reassessment of Maximus's style, see Carlos Laga, "Maximus as a Stylist in Quaestiones ad Thalassium," in *Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium*, 139–146. For a broader view of Photius's description of Maximus, see Bogna Kosmulska, "Maximus the Confessor in Photius's Bibliotheke," *Origeniana undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought: Papers of the 11th International Origen Congress, Aarhus University, 26–31 August 2013*, ed. Anders Christen Jacobsen (Louvain: Peeters, 2016), 759–766.

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reasons to revise this distinction. First, in the *Introduction*, Maximus confronts Thalassius's concerns about the passions with exegesis, interpreting Genesis to explain the origin of the passions. Second, in *Question 1*, Maximus bases his argument for the "good use of the passions"[2] on Scripture, reflecting on the behavior of God and the saints in the Bible. Also in *Question 1* Maximus elaborates on the proper use of the passions by employing the metaphor of a doctor who heals a snakebite with the serpent's own venom. Maximus expands on this image and threads it into later exegetical questions. Third, Maximus's discussion of the passions in *Ad Thalassium* discloses his personal ascetic struggle rooted in a dynamic engagement with Scripture. His conclusion about the passions and their good use is drawn from reflection on Scripture in his daily life as an ascetic.

1 Exegesis of the Human Heart: Perspectives from the *Introduction*

1.1 *The Problem of the Passions and Maximus's Exegetical Response*

In the *Introduction*, Maximus lists a series of questions about the passions appended to the scriptural difficulties presented by Thalassius. Thalassius's thirty-three questions on the passions range from the simple and straightforward (How many passions are there? What are their names?) to the more speculative (To what part of the soul or to what part of the body do the passions belong? Do the passions attack men in a certain order?).[3] Maximus resists responding to each individual question. Instead, he offers a comprehensive reply, electing to explain the origin of the passions.

Maximus's response unfolds on two interrelated levels: philosophical and exegetical. First, he offers a philosophical explanation of evil, most likely drawn from Dionysius the Areopagite, who himself is dependent on Proclus.[4] Maximus writes:

> Evil neither existed nor exists nor will exist according to its own nature; [Evil,] in fact neither possesses essence, nor nature, nor hypostasis, nor possibility, nor potentiality, nor activity, as in the manner of other

2 Cf. (CCSG 7: 47–49).

3 For a complete list, see *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 23–29).

4 *d.n.* 4.18–35 (PTS 33: 161–180). For Dionysius's dependency on Proclus, see Carlos Steel, "Proclus et Denys: de l'existence du mal," *Denys l'aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident*, ed. Ysabel de Andia (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 89–116. For an analysis of the relationship between the thought of Maximus and Dionysius, see "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor," in *OHMC*, 177–193.

> creatures; [Evil] is neither quality nor quantity, nor state, nor mode, nor temporal, nor position, nor action, nor movement, nor disposition, nor passion, that which is naturally contemplated in any being; [Evil] in no way exists in any of these things through natural appropriations; [Evil] is neither a beginning, nor a means, nor an end. But, so that I may capture it in definition: Evil is a failure (ἔλλειψις) to actualize one's inborn, natural powers toward their end, and nothing else at all (καὶ ἄλλο καθάπαξ οὐδέν).[5]

Maximus concludes with a clear definition, emphasizing his point through overstatement. He describes evil through a long series of negations, stripping it of any ontological quality—at no time does evil subsist, nor does it possess any of the categories of being, nor can it even appropriate a category of being by inhering in a substance. At the end of the description, he describes evil as deficiency or failure (ἔλλειψις). The metaphysical treatment of evil can answer the question "what" evil is, but does not explain "why" it is, namely, its origin. Maximus turns to Genesis to answer this question, relating the concept of metaphysical deficiency to Adam's personal failure:

> Or again, evil is the irrational movement of one's natural powers toward something other than his end; By end I mean, the cause of beings, toward which all things naturally tend, even if the evil one, who, after he veiled his utmost wickedness with the form of benevolence, and after he persuaded man with his bait to shift his desire away from his cause to some other being, contrived ignorance of one's cause.[6]

Maximus expands upon evil as failure, calling it an irrational movement against one's cause. The Confessor introduces the evil one (ὁ πονηρός) as the source of this confusion. Hence, the existence of evil is not drawn from abstract

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5 Τὸ κακὸν οὔτε ἦν οὔτε ἔστιν οὔτε ἔσται κατ' οἰκείαν φύσιν ὑφεστώς—οὔτε γὰρ ἔχει καθοτιοῦν οὐσίαν ἢ φύσιν ἢ ὑπόστασιν ἢ δύναμιν ἢ ἐνέργειαν ἐν τοῖς οὖσιν—, οὔτε ποιότης ἐστὶν οὔτε ποσότης οὔτε σχέσις οὔτε τόπος οὔτε χρόνος οὔτε θέσις οὔτε ποίησις οὔτε κίνησις οὔτε ἕξις οὔτε πάθος, φυσικῶς τῶν ὄντων τινὶ ἐνθεωρούμενον—οὔτε μὴν ἐν τούτοις πᾶσιν τὸ παράπαν κατ' οἰκείωσιν φυσικὴν ὑφέστηκεν—, οὔτε ἀρχὴ οὔτε μεσότης οὔτε τέλος ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ἵνα ὡς ἐν ὅρῳ περιλαβὼν εἴπω, τὸ κακὸν τῆς πρὸς τὸ τέλος τῶν ἐγκειμένων τῇ φύσει δυνάμεων ἐνεργείας ἐστὶν ἔλλειψις, καὶ ἄλλο καθάπαξ οὐδέν. Ibid. (CCSG 7: 29).

6 Ἤ πάλιν, τὸ κακὸν τῶν φυσικῶν δυνάμεων κατ' ἐσφαλμένην κρίσιν ἐστὶν ἐπ' ἄλλο παρὰ τὸ τέλος ἀλόγιστος κίνησις· τέλος δέ φημι τὴν τῶν ὄντων αἰτίαν, ἧς φυσικῶς ἐφίεται πάντα, κἂν εἰ τὰ μάλιστα τὸν φθόνον εὐνοίας πλάσματι καλύψας ὁ πονηρός, πρὸς ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων παρὰ τὴν αἰτίαν κινῆσαι τὴν ἔφεσιν παραπείσας δόλῳ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, τὴν τῆς αἰτίας ἐδημιούργησεν ἄγνοιαν. *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 29–31).

observations about the natural world. Rather, Maximus teaches that evil has Adam as its personal author, enticed by the serpent.

> Hence the first man—since he failed (ἐλλείψας) to exercise the actualization of natural powers toward their end—was infected with the ignorance of God, and under the counsel of the serpent, he considered himself to be God, the very thing the Word of the divine law commanded him to swear [not to do].[7]

Maximus juxtaposes his philosophical definition of evil and the biblical account, explaining Adam's sin with the technical language of "deficiency" that he elaborated earlier in the *Introduction*. Adam exercised his natural powers deficiently. The arrangement of Maximus's exposition is crucial to understand his exegetical method. Maximus lives in a "wider universe," where he integrates biblical revelation and philosophical theodicy to form one world. Maximus navigates easily between the two realms.[8]

1.2 *The Ignorance of God and the Interpretive Problem for the Spiritual Life*

As a result of the Fall, humanity is subjected to ignorance of God (ἄγνοια τοῦ θεοῦ). Maximus's account of *apatheia* are bound up with this form of ignorance, which affects humanity's fundamental perception of the world. For Maximus, Ignorance of God has "mutilated (πηρώσασα) the human mind."[9] As a result, fallen humanity "partakes of knowledge solely and unabashedly through sense experience"[10] and clings to sensible reality because he has neglected his

7 Τῆς οὖν πρὸς τὸ τέλος ἐνεργείας τῶν κατὰ φύσιν δυνάμεων ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος ἐλλείψας τὴν κίνησιν, τὴν τῆς οἰκείας αἰτίας ἐνόσησεν ἄγνοιαν, ἐκεῖνο νομίσας εἶναι θεὸν διὰ τῆς συμβουλῆς τοῦ ὄφεως, ὅπερ ἔχειν ἀπώμοτον ὁ τῆς θείας ἐντολῆς διετάξατο λόγος. Ibid. (CCSG 7: 31).

8 Maximus often contemplates the same problem in different "keys" as it were within the same passage. For example, in *Ambiguum 41*, Maximus examines Christ's role in "instituting natures afresh" and reconciling the five cosmic divisions of being, first according to the language of the New Testament (PG 91: 1308C–1312B) and then narrating it according to the philosophical categories of genera and species (1312B–1314B).

9 "This therefore is evil as I have already said: the ignorance of the good cause of things, the thing which has mutilated the human mind." (Τὸ τοίνυν κακόν ἐστιν, ὡς προέφην, ἡ ἄγνοια τῆς ἀγαθῆς τῶν ὄντων αἰτίας· ἥτις, τὸν μὲν νοῦν πηρώσασα τὸν ἀνθρώπινον). *ad Thal*, intro. (CCSG 7: 35).

10 ἧς πρὸς μόνην τὴν αἴσθησιν ἀνέδην μεταλαμβάνων, κτηνῶν ἀλόγων δίκην, ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ εὑρὼν διὰ τῆς πείρας τῆς φαινομένης αὐτοῦ σωματικῆς φύσεως συστατικὴν τῶν αἰσθητῶν τὴν μετάληψιν. Ibid.

immaterial cause, that is, God. Under this veil of ignorance, the human being cannot apprehend spiritual realities. However, he can still grasp some hint of the Divine hidden in creation, albeit in a deformed way. Maximus writes:

> As is natural, man, already having mistaken thoroughly the intellectual beauty of divine splendor, mistakes visible creation for God and divinizes it in order to sustain his body. And man's own body, which has a natural propensity to consider creation to be God, loves creation because of its form and with all his zeal "worships the creature instead of the creator" through his dedication and concentration toward only the body. (Rom 1:25)[11]

The problem of embodied nature underlies Maximus's description of ignorance of God. Humanity conceptualizes spiritual concepts, which do not occur in time and space, in terms of spatial dimensions. Idolatry then is the result of a thin reading of creation, where man collapses the distinction between the Creator and the creature. Creation here is no longer *of* God, but *is* God, itself a divine idol. Hence, idolatry follows from ignorance of God, leaving man to grasp for a placeholder for his forgotten Creator.[12] Maximus explains this reductionist view of creation in reference to the Tree of Good and Evil. He writes: "And, perhaps, one would not be wrong in saying that the Tree of the

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11 εἰκότως, οἷα τοῦ νοητοῦ κάλλους ἤδη τῆς θείας ὡραιότητος διαμαρτήσας, τὴν φαινομένην κτίσιν εἰς θεὸν παρεγνώρισεν, διὰ τὴν αὐτῆς πρὸς σύστασιν σώματος χρείαν θεοποιήσας, καὶ τὸ σῶμα τὸ ἴδιον, οἰκείως ἔχον κατὰ φύσιν πρὸς τὴν νομισθεῖσαν εἶναι θεὸν κτίσιν, κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἠγάπησεν, κατὰ πᾶσαν σπουδὴν διὰ τῆς περὶ μόνον τὸ σῶμα φροντίδος τε καὶ ἐπιμελείας λατρεύων τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα. Ibid. The passage Rom 1:25 is the subject of *qu. Thal.* 14, the shortest of Maximus's responses (CCSG 7: 99).

12 Larchet observes that Maximus's teaching on ignorance of God and the Fall shares much with Athanasius, who claims that the soul's forgetfulness (λήθη) begins with the Fall and engenders the passions, cf. *inc.*, 4.5; *gen.* 3.9; See Larchet, *Maxime le Confesseur: Questions à Thalassios* (SC 529: 140 n1). Jonathan Morgan argues that Athanasius's doctrine on the soul's forgetfulness has Platonic antecedents, both in Plato's *Phaedrus* (248c) and Plotinus' *Ennead* (5.1). Recognizing that Athanasius's familiarity with Platonism was limited, Morgan thinks that this doctrine likely reached Athanasius via Origen, cf. *Prin.* 1.4.4o. See Jonathan Morgan, "The Soul's Forgetfulness of God in Athanasius' Doctrine of the Fall," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2016): 473–488, esp. 480–484. For comment on Athanasius's limited knowledge of Platonic philosophy, see John M. Rist, "Basil's Neoplatonism: Its Background and Nature," in *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic: At Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium*, ed. Paul Jonathan Fedwick (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), 173–178.

Knowledge of Good and Evil is visible creation."[13] Both the tree and creation are facts—benign in themselves—that require interpretation:

> Creation … is considered the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. On the one hand it possesses the knowledge of the good, when contemplated spiritually, on the other hand, the knowledge of evil when received corporeally.[14]

Humanity can recognize knowledge of the good in creation. The corporeal exerts an influence on the mind and distorts analysis. This physicalized vision is ill-attuned to the subtle mark of the divine, the spiritual *logoi* laden in creation.[15] The material world then becomes the "teacher of passions" when interpreted in a carnal way, devoid of this spiritual understanding.[16]

1.3 *Ignorance of God as the Midwife of the Passions*

For Maximus, man's ignorance of God (ἄγνοια τοῦ θεοῦ) is a general disposition that is both the ground and the origin of particular passionate activity. This ignorance spawns the two principal passions, pleasure and pain, typical of ancient and Hellenistic Greek philosophy.[17] Man's fall into ignorance sets

13 Ibid. Maximus returns to the problem of the two trees in *qu. Thal.* 47 (CCSG 7: 293). Gregory of Nyssa is the likely source of Maximus's consideration of the two trees present in Eden. Cf. *Hom. in Cant.* 12. On Gregory's interpretation of this passage, see Robert A. Norris, "Two Trees in the Midst of the Garden (Genesis 2:9b): Gregory of Nyssa and the Puzzle of Human Evil," *In dominico eloquio—In Lordly Eloquence: Essays on Patristic Exegesis in Honor of Robert Louis Wilken*, ed. Paul M. Blowers, Angela Russell Christman, and David G. Hunter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 218–241. For an analysis on Maximus's comment in light of the prior tradition, see Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 162–68; Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy*, 189–91.

14 "ἡ κτίσις … ξύλον γνωστὸν καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ προσηγορεύθη, τοῦ καλοῦ μὲν ἔχουσα γνῶσιν, θεωρουμένη πνευματικῶς, κακοῦ δὲ γνῶσιν, λαμβανομένη σωματικῶς." Ibid. (CCSG 7: 37).

15 Ibid. On the theme of "*logoi*" in Maximus, the classic text is *ambig.* 7 (PG 91: 1068D–1101D). For comment, see Irénée Henri Dalmais, "La théorie des 'logoi' des créatures chez S. Maxime le Confesseur," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 36 (1952): 244–249. More recently, see Larchet, *La divinization de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, 125–151; Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, 109–119.

16 "Hence creation becomes a teacher of the passions for those who participate in creation in a corporeal way, inducing them to forgetfulness of divine things." Παθῶν γὰρ γίνεται διδάσκαλος τοῖς σωματικῶς αὐτῆς μεταλαμβάνουσιν, τῶν θείων αὐτοῖς λήθην ἐπάγουσα. *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 37).

17 For a general treatment, see Christoph von Schönborn, "Plaisir et douleur dans l'analyse de saint Maxime d'après les 'Quaestiones ad Thalassium'," in *Maximus Confesseur. Actes du Symposium*, 273–284.

off a series of chain reactions, which Maximus explains with his characteristic formula, "ὅσον … τοσοῦτον":[18]

> Hence, inasmuch as man was preoccupied with knowledge of visible realities only according to sense, in the same measure, he fastened (ἐπέσφιγγεν) himself tighter to the ignorance of God; inasmuch as he tightened the latch of this ignorance, in the same measure, he clung (ἀντείχετο) to the experience of the physical enjoyment of material known to him; inasmuch as he sated himself with sensual pleasure, in the same measure, he attached (ἐξῆπτε) himself to the desire of self-love wrought by it; inasmuch as he carefully guarded his desire, in the same measure he guarded pleasure, it being the beginning and end of self-love.[19]

Maximus uses three key verbs, to fasten, to cling, and to attach (ἐπέσφιγγεν; ἀντείχετο; ἐξῆπτε) to describe "synthetic knowledge." This form of knowledge is contorted by sense experience and binds one necessarily to a solely material existence.[20] At the end of this series of chain reactions, he introduces a consequence: self-love.[21] He claims self-love engenders the passionate pursuit of pleasure.[22]

If for Maximus, ignorance of God is the disease, then the unbridled pursuit of pleasure and the panicked avoidance of pain are fundamental symptoms of fallen human existence. Maximus observes that no human experience of pleasure exists without pain; they are necessarily interrelated. However,

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18 Cf. *qu. Thal.* 64 (CCSG 22: 237); *ambig.* 33 (PG 91: 1285C–1288A). For comment, see Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 280–284; Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 134, 453; Larchet, *La divinization de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, 376–382.

19 Ὅσον οὖν κατὰ μόνην τὴν αἴσθησιν τῆς τῶν ὁρωμένων ἐπεμελεῖτο γνώσεως ὁ ἄνθρωπος, τοσοῦτον ἐπέσφιγγεν ἑαυτῷ τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ἄγνοιαν· ὅσον δὲ ταύτης τῆς ἀγνοίας συνέσφιγγε τὸν δεσμόν, τοσοῦτον τῆς πείρας ἀντείχετο τῆς τῶν γνωσθέντων ὑλικῶν αἰσθητικῆς ἀπολαύσεως· ὅσον δὲ ταύτης ἐνεφορεῖτο, τοσοῦτον τῆς ἐκ ταύτης γεννωμένης φιλαυτίας ἐξῆπτε τὸν ἔρωτα· ὅσον δὲ πεφροντισμένως περιεποιεῖτο τῆς φιλαυτίας τὸν ἔρωτα, τοσοῦτον τῆς ἡδονῆς, ὡς τῆς φιλαυτίας οὔσης καὶ γεννήματος καὶ τέλους, Ibid. (CCSG 7: 31).

20 Maximus later comments on how God's gift of theosis grants fixity in the divine life.

21 This concept has been treated in Irénée Hausherr, *Philautie: de la tendresse pour soi à la charité selon saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1952).

22 Here, Maximus, in line with typical Greek thought, distinguishes pleasure of the passionate sort, something not to be pursued as an end in itself, from pleasure as just a simple by-product of action. Cf. Plato *Protagoras* 351b–358d; *Gorgias* 492d–507e, *Republic* 9.581a–587e, *Phaedo* 60b; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.1–5. The Epicurean doctrine is an obvious, though often exaggerated foil in this respect. For the Stoic-Epicurean debate see Diogenes Laertius 7.85–6 (SVF 3.178).

this fact does not stop humanity from trying to separate pleasure from pain. Maximus describes man's efforts in succinct almost psalmodic parallel structure: "Toward pleasure he aims all his desire, from pain, every escape. In struggling for pleasure with all his forces, yet struggling against pain with all his zeal."[23] Through self-delusion, humanity believes it is within his power to win the battle against pain for pleasure, seeking the experience of pleasure free of pain, forgetting the necessary connection between the two here and now. For Maximus, the dialectic of pleasure and pain—and fallen man's response to it—is the moment of the genesis of the other passions:

> Here, the great innumerable crowd of the passions forced its way into the life of men. Here, our life[24] became full of groaning as it honored the impetus of its destruction and through ignorance, seeking and clinging to its own demise. Here, man's one nature is divided into a thousand pieces. Here, we who are of the same nature with one another become a waste, in the manner of senseless beasts. Therefore, seeking after pleasure because of our self-love, and hastening to flee pain for the same reason, we contrive the multitude of destructive passions.[25]

In the fight for pleasure, man becomes skilled at finding ways to increase his experience of pleasure, deluding himself about the accompanying experience of pain. According to Maximus, while pleasure and pain are always "mixed," there are those who have a certain control (ἐπικράτειαν) over pleasure that cloaks the accompanying feeling of pain (τὸ ἐπικρατοῦν … καλύπτον τοῦ παρακειμένου τὴν αἴσθησιν).[26] This trick is little more than self-medication, numbing the symptomatic pricks of passion, but it does little to cure them. Later in *Ad Thalassium*, Maximus describes how Christ inverts this coping mechanism for pain. In his earthly life and on the Cross, Christ enters into this dialectic and

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23 πρὸς μὲν τὴν ἡδονὴν τὴν ὅλην ἔσχεν ὁρμήν, πρὸς δὲ ὀδύνην τὴν ὅλην ἀποφυγήν τῆς μὲν κατὰ πᾶσαν δυναμιν ὑπεραγωνιζόμενος τῆς δὲ κατὰ πᾶσαν σπουδὴν καταγωνιζόμενος. *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 31).

24 Here: ἡμῶν ἡ ζωή. Maximus slips between third person and first person.

25 Ἐντεῦθεν ὁ πολὺς ὄχλος τῶν παθῶν καὶ ἀναρίθμητος εἰσεφθάρη τῷ βίῳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων· ἐντεῦθεν πολυστένακτος γέγονεν ἡμῶν ἡ ζωή, τῆς οἰκείας ἀναιρέσεως τιμῶσα τὰς ἀφορμὰς καὶ τῆς φθορᾶς τὰς προφάσεις ἑαυτῇ διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν ἐξευρίσκουσά τε καὶ περιέπουσα· ἐντεῦθεν ἡ μία φύσις εἰς μυρία κατεμερίσθη τμήματα καὶ οἱ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως ἀλλήλων ἐσμὲν δίκην ἑρπετῶν θηρίων παραναλώματα. Ἡδονῆς γὰρ διὰ τὴν φιλαυτίαν ἀντιποιούμενοι καὶ ὀδύνην διὰ τὴν αὐτὴν αἰτίαν πάλιν φεύγειν σπουδάζοντες, τὰς ἀμυθήτους τῶν φθοροποιῶν παθῶν ἐπινοοῦμεν γενέσεις. Ibid. (CCSG 7, 33).

26 Ibid.

does the opposite of Adam: he refuses pleasure and willingly accepts pain.[27] Maximus explains the proper way for Christians to interact with the dialectic of pleasure and pain and how to "use" these passions wisely.

1.4 *Apatheia as Salutary Ignorance and Its Relationship to Deification*

For Maximus, pleasure and pain arise through a mistaken relationship to the material world. Man divinizes creation (τὴν κτίσιν ἐθεοποίησεν) due to his ignorance concerning God (ἄγνοια περὶ θεοῦ). As a remedy, Maximus proposes detachment from sense experience together with the gift of divine charity. He writes: "The true love of God … as well as the soul's complete denial of the affections of the body and this world are deliverance from all these evils and the short road to salvation; by this denial … we are uplifted to knowledge of the Creator."[28] Maximus says this separation from the world is the way man becomes ἀπαθής. He describes the state of dispassion as "salutary ignorance about this world" (πρὸς τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον τὴν σῴζουσαν … ἄγνοιαν).[29] This phrase is a play on words meant to oppose the ignorance of God that man inherits as a result of the fall. Humanity, in possession of this salutary ignorance, approaches nature "with veiled face, reflecting as in a mirror of the Glory of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). Maximus's use of Pauline language is striking. He describes salvific ignorance of God as a "veil." Yet, this veil does not obstruct vision. Instead, it provides a different way of seeing:

> Since immovable love abides in us, we receive from God the eternal and unspeakable joy and stability of soul. Having been deemed worthy of this, we shall possess the salvific ignorance of this world, no longer without wise thinking, as before, with the face of sensibility having been unveiled, no longer seeing the manifestation of sensible reality as his glory. Rather, with the face of intellect being unveiled, through the freeing of every veil of sensible experience, which by virtue and spiritual knowledge we contemplate the glory of God.[30]

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27 Cf. *qu. Thal.* 21.

28 *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 39).

29 Ibid. (CCSG 7: 41).

30 τῆς ἀγάπης ἐν ἡμῖν ἀκινήτου μενούσης, τῆς ψυχῆς ἀΐδιόν τε καὶ ἄρρητον ἐξ αὐτοῦ χορηγούμενοι εὐφροσύνην καὶ σύστασιν· ἧς ἀξιωθέντες, πρὸς μὲν τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον τὴν σῴζουσαν ἕξομεν ἄγνοιαν, μηκέτι δίχα λογισμοῦ σώφρονος, ὡς τὸ πρότερον, ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ὡς δόξαν τὴν τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἐπιφάνειαν βλέποντες, περὶ ἣν τὰ πάθη προδήλως ἔχει τὴν γένεσιν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ τῆς διανοίας προσώπῳ, παντὸς αἰσθητοῦ καλύμματος ἀπηλλαγμένῳ ἣν ἐν ἀρεταῖς καὶ γνώσει πνευματικῇ δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ κατοπτριζόμενοι. Ibid. (CCSG 7: 41).

The "ignorance of this world" is itself a "veil" that conceals from man the corporeal way of seeing reality. Paradoxically, this veil also reveals. Beneath the veil of "salutary ignorance," man sees creation as God intended it, nothing less than a reflection of his own glory.

Divine assistance heals this failed hermeneutic. Maximus explains that God delays man's knowledge of good and evil for pedagogical motives:

> For this reason, perhaps, God forbade man, delaying—for a while—man's participation [in this knowledge], first, as was most proper, through participation in grace, man having understood his proper cause and by this participation, having affirmed that immortality is given by grace, just like impassibility (ἀπάθειαν) and immutability (ἀτρεψίαν), consequently becoming like God through *theosis*, so that man might examine God's creation with God's help, without harming his freedom in order that man might appropriate knowledge of these things as God does, not as man.[31]

God intends to give man a gift: to become like God, through theosis.[32] Man's participation in divine life includes interpretive assistance. For Maximus, theosis entails that God becomes for man an exegete of the material world, pointing out for him the right way to "read" creation. The inner identification between the scriptural world and the material world is a theme dear to Maximus,[33] but here he draws a parallel between asceticism and exegesis. Asceticism corrects humanity's mistaken comprehension of the two respective "texts": Scripture and the cosmos. Yet the performance of the ascetical effort, while necessary, is not sufficient for a proper "spiritual reading" of either. Ascetical renunciation prepares us for our guide, the gift of God himself. Furthermore, Maximus describes this state as *apatheia*, showing the ascetical face of divinization. The

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31 Διὸ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τυχὸν καὶ ἀπηγόρευσεν ἀναβαλόμενος αὐτῆς τέως τὴν μετάληψιν ὁ θεός, ἵνα πρότερον, ὡς ἦν μάλιστα δίκαιον, διὰ τῆς ἐν χάριτι μετοχῆς τὴν οἰκείαν ἐπιγνοὺς αἰτίαν καὶ τὴν δοθεῖσαν κατὰ χάριν ἀθανασίαν διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης μεταλήψεως πρὸς ἀπάθειαν στομώσας καὶ ἀτρεψίαν, ὡς θεὸς ἤδη τῇ θεώσει γενόμενος, ἀβλαβῶς ἐπ' ἀδείας μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ διασκέψηται κτίσματα καὶ τὴν αὐτῶν ἀναλήψηται γνῶσιν ὡς θεὸς ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, Ibid. (CCSG 7: 37).

32 The succinct historical treatment of this theme in Maximus is Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, 262–295. On this unifying theme in Maximus, see the encyclopedic work of Larchet, *La divinization de l'homme*.

33 Cf. *ambig*. 10 (PG 91: 1125A–1133A); *ambig*. 33 (PG 91: 1285C–1288A). See Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 291–313. Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy*, 100–132; Blowers, "The World in the Mirror of the Holy Scripture: Maximus the Confessor's Short Hermeneutical Treatise in Ambiguum ad Johannem 37," *In dominico eloquio*, 408–426.

parallelism is clear. Ignorance of God results in the creation of idols, reified concepts external to us with "lips that do not speak."[34] Divinization proposes the opposite, the inner transformation of man into God by grace, not with lips that do not speak, but with the gift of the serenity of *apatheia*.

2 Christ: the Snake Charmer of Human Passibility

2.1 *The Principle Metaphor of* Ad Thalassium

Maximus continues to respond to Thalassius's interest in the passions in *Question 1*. The question is: "Are the passions evil in themselves or are they evil because of bad use: I mean pleasure, pain, desire, and fear, and the passions that follow them?"[35] Thalassius's question enumerates the four classic passions identified by the Stoics, which, by the time of Maximus's composition, were long accepted into the lingua franca of Christian ascetic literature.[36] Maximus responds *ex auctoritate* using Gregory of Nyssa[37] to explain that the passions are not original to human nature, but they attached themselves to human nature "due to [man's] fall from perfection."[38] Nevertheless, there are "good passions" (καλὰ παθή).[39] These passions become good in the hands of those who have "wisely separated themselves from corporeal objects and used them to gain possession of heavenly things."[40] Maximus goes on to describe how the cardinal passions are transformed, each having an end in God:

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34 Ps 115:5.

35 Τὰ πάθη αὐτὰ καθ' αὑτὰ κακὰ ἢ παρὰ τὴν χρῆσιν κακά; Λέγω δὲ ἡδονὴν καὶ λύπην, ἐπιθυμίαν καὶ φόβον, καὶ τὰ τούτοις ἑπόμενα. *qu. Thal.* 1 (CCSG 7: 47).

36 Cf. *ambig.* 10 (PG 91:1196D–1200A), where Maximus offers a taxonomy of subdivisions of these four basic passions, a teaching that goes back to classical Stoicism. Here, Maximus's list is almost verbatim of Nemesius of Emesa's *De nat. hom.* 15–22. See Moreno Moriani, *La tradizione manoscritta del "De natura hominis" di Nemesio* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1981), 101–104.

37 Gregory's key texts here are *virg.* 12.2, 18; *hom. opif.* 17,18; *hom in cant.* 8, 12. For an analysis of Gregory's doctrine on the passions in comparison to Maximus, see Paul M. Blowers, "Gentiles of the Soul: Maximus the Confessor on the Substructure and Transformation of the Human Passions," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4, no. 1 (1996): 57–85.

38 Λέγω δέ, παρὰ τοῦ Νυσσαέως μεγάλου Γρηγορίου μαθών, ὅτι διὰ τὴν τῆς τελειότητος ἔκπτωσιν ἐπεισήχθη ταῦτα, τῷ ἀλογωτέρῳ μέρει προσφυέντα τῆς φύσεως. *qu. Thal.* 1 (CCSG 7: 47).

39 Ibid.

40 Πλὴν καλὰ γίνεται καὶ τὰ πάθη ἐν τοῖς σπουδαίοις, ὁπηνίκα σοφῶς αὐτὰ τῶν σωματικῶν ἀποστήσαντες, πρὸς τὴν τῶν οὐρανίων μεταχειρίζονται κτῆσιν. Ibid.

> [These wise ones] have turned desire (ἐπιθυμίαν) into a movement of the intellectual appetite for divine things (τῆς νοερᾶς τῶν θείων ἐφέσεως), and pleasure (ἡδονήν) into innocent joy (εὐφροσύνην ἀπήμονα) through the attractive movement of the mind toward divine gifts; fear (φόβον) into a precautionary vigilance (προφυλακτικὴν ἐπιμέλειαν) in view of the coming judgment of our sins; and grief (λύπην) into corrective repentance (διορθωτικὴν μεταμέλειαν) from present evil.[41]

Maximus associates negative passion with a corresponding good emotion. The passion of desire can be converted into desire for God, pleasure into benevolent joy, fear into healthy vigilance, and grief into repentance. These positive emotions resemble something of the Stoic's concept of εὐπάθειαι. However, Maximus's version is significantly different. First, the passions (παθή) for the Stoics always have a negative connotation. Instead, Maximus describes them as morally neutral movements of the soul. For Maximus, the passions are certain powers of the soul that can be used rightly or wrongly. However, he emphasizes not their moderation, nor their eradication and the presence of good emotions; he insists on their transformation. Maximus explains his response with a metaphor:

> Put succinctly, just as the skilled doctors remove both the present and threatening affliction of their body by means of the deadly beast, the serpent; [so too] we use these passions for the destruction of evil both present and incumbent, as well as to acquire and to guard virtue and knowledge. Therefore, they are good—as I have said—through their use by those "who take every thought captive in obedience to Christ."[42]

Maximus compares the good use of passions with a doctor who uses a poisonous snake to cure disease and prevent illness.[43] Just as doctors use snake venom to cure others, the Christian can grab his own slithery passions by the

41 οἷον, τὴν μὲν ἐπιθυμίαν τῆς νοερᾶς τῶν θείων ἐφέσεως ὀρεκτικὴν ἐργά σονται κίνησιν, τὴν ἡδονὴν δὲ τῆς ἐπὶ τοῖς θείοις χαρίσμασι τοῦ νοῦ θελκτικῆς ἐνεργείας εὐφροσύνην ἀπήμονα, τὸν δὲ φόβον τῆς μελλούσης ἐπὶ πλημμελήμασι τιμωρίας προφυλακτικὴν ἐπιμέλειαν, τὴν δὲ λύπην διορθωτικὴν ἐπὶ παρόντι κακῷ μεταμέλειαν. Ibid.

42 καὶ συντόμως εἰπεῖν, κατὰ τοὺς σοφοὺς τῶν ἰατρῶν, σώματι φθαρτικοῦ θηρὸς τῆς ἐχίδνης τὴν οὖσαν ἢ μελετωμένην ἀφαιρουμένους λώβωσιν, τοῖς πάθεσι τούτοις πρὸς ἀναίρεσιν χρώμενοι παρούσης κακίας ἢ προσδοκωμένης, καὶ κτῆσιν καὶ φυλακὴν ἀρετῆς τε καὶ γνώσεως. Καλὰ οὖν, ὡς ἔφην, ταῦτα τυγχάνει διὰ τὴν χρῆσιν ἐν τοῖς πᾶν νόημα αἰχμαλωτίζουσιν εἰς τὴν ὑπακοὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ. *qu. Thal.* 1 (CCSG 7: 47–49). Cf. 2 Cor 10:5.

43 Laga argues that "μελετάω" signifies in medical terminology "to threaten with illness." See Laga, "Maximus as Stylist," 141.

tail to make them work for good. As such, Maximus refers to Paul to support his view.

2.2 *The Christological Overtones of the Metaphor*

On the basis of this metaphor, are the saints just self-medicating "wise doctors"? If this were so, then Maximus is simply advocating a self-help program, one that numbs but does not heal. One would simply need to learn a few tricks to make the "snakebites" work to one's benefit. Yet, this way of dealing with the passions is precisely what Maximus describes as the fallen relationship to pleasure and pain in the *Introduction*. Motivated by self-love, man is able to cloak pain through a mastery of pleasure.

Maximus proposes a different rationale. In *Question 21*, he takes up the metaphor again, developing it in an overtly Christological key. Maximus addresses the question, "What is the meaning of the Scripture, 'He put off the powers and principalities,' and following? And how indeed had he 'put them on' at all when he was begotten without sin?"[44] In his response, Maximus considers at length the physical Pauline language of Christ's putting on (ἐνδυσάμενος) and putting off (ἀπεκδυσάμενος). He understands these words in light of Christ's enfleshment, where "in his love for humanity, the only-begotten Son and Logos of God became a perfect human being" while taking on the "original condition of Adam,"[45] which also includes putting on humanity's precarious passible state.

Maximus describes Christ's humanity as a war against the passions. The evil powers hoped to "use natural passibility" against the Savior. In submitting himself to Adamic life, Christ also submits himself to pleasure and pain, which Maximus discusses in the *Introduction* as the two principal passions produced in the Fall. Christ's submission to these passions is soteriological: "He submitted to it so that, by experiencing our temptations, he might provoke the evil power and thwart its attack, putting to death the very power that expected to seduce him, just as it had Adam in the beginning."[46] But Christ's plan turns the tables. Just as the evil powers use the passions to seduce man into his fallen state, Christ redeems man through use of the passions, by offering man the possibility to interact with them differently. Christ enters into the dialectic of pleasure and pain and repurposes them in two steps. First, he confronts pleasure in the temptation in the desert, canceling the bond of "Adam's deliberate acquiescence to those hedonistic passions,"[47] and he puts off the powers and

44 *qu. Thal.* 21 (CCSG 7: 127). The Scripture verse in question is Col 2:15.
45 Ibid. (CCSG 7: 129).
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.

principalities once and for all, specifically on the Cross, on which he confronts the temptation of pain and toil:

> Therefore, since after he had weakened the evil powers through his first experience of pleasure, he foiled the principalities and powers. For a second time, the Lord permitted them to launch a second attack and introduce the remaining experience of temptations by work and toil, so that, having completely drained himself of the deadly poison of their evil, he might consume it like a fire. Having totally stripped [the passibility of pain] from our nature, he "put off the principalities on the powers" at the moment of his death on the Cross, remaining impenetrable to toil, or rather in appearing fearful of death, he unfastened from our nature the passibility of pain.[48]

Christ's second and final confrontation with man's passible state and the second principal passion—pain—occurs on the Cross. In describing the Crucifixion, Maximus employs the same medical imagery as his medical metaphor in *Question 1*. He describes the Cross as a surgical procedure, where Christ empties out (κενοῦν) the venom (ἰός) from himself, as from a gaping wound. This allusion brings us back to *Question 1*, where the wise doctors treat sickness, with the poison of the viper like a vaccination process. The difference here is that Christ's surgery is not for his own sake but for ours. Maximus writes that Christ's impenetrability before pleasure and pain unfastens (ἐξηλοῦν) these vicious passions from human nature, recalling the imagery of attachment (ἐπέσφιγγεν; ἀντείχετο; ἐξῆπτε) from the *Introduction*. Seen in this light, Christ is the "wise doctor" whom Maximus describes in the initial metaphor in *Question 1*. As the doctor of souls and bodies, Christ heals the wound of human passibility with his own flesh. In this way, he treats the disease from the inside out, repurposing the passions by his own experience of them.

2.3 *Participation in Christ's Death as Medicinal Remedy for Sin*

Maximus develops this theme further. Christ confronts and repurposes not just pleasure and pain, but the ultimate extent of human passibility itself—death.[49] In the hands of Christ, death becomes the instrument that conquers

48 Ibid. (CCSG 7: 131).

49 On this point, I am indebted to the insights of John Behr, whose succinct and artful exploration of Christ's use of death and its implications for Christian anthropology can be found in *Becoming Human: Meditations on Christian Anthropology in Word and Image* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013), 49–57.

sin. *Question 61* demonstrates this well. "Willingly submitting to the condemnation imposed on our passibility [by this I mean our passive subjection to suffering], he turned that very passibility into an instrument for eradicating sin and its consequences."[50] Christ conquers sin through the very thing that conquered man in the first place: passibility.[51] The passibility of death is not just repurposed but transformed: "He calls it [death] another beginning, a second nativity (γένεσις) for human nature, which through the vehicle of suffering ends in the pleasure of the life to come."[52] In Christ, death becomes a second birth. Death is no longer the period at the end of a sentence, but a comma. In this manner, Christ offers a way out of the vicious cycle of running from pain and embracing pleasure. Such is the cycle of Adam, whose pursuit of pleasure without the necessary experience of pain caused death to enter the world. For this reason, Maximus calls this destructive pleasure the "birth mother" of death: "Death, once it has ceased having pleasure as its birth mother—that pleasure for which death itself became the natural punishment—clearly becomes the father of everlasting life."[53] The imposed consequence of Adam's vicious cycle is death. For Maximus, Christ repurposes death through his experience. Death becomes the vehicle by which one arrives at eternal pleasure, that is, everlasting life. Each baptized Christian must appropriate subjectively what Christ has done objectively in his willing acceptance of suffering and death:

> Because of Christ, who completely divested his human nature of the law of birth through pleasure, and who willingly took up the use of death—which on Adam's account had condemned human nature—solely for purposes of condemning sin, all who in the spirit are willingly reborn

50 τὸ ἐν τῷ παθητῷ κατάκριμα τῆς φύσεως κατὰ θέλησιν ὑποδὺς κἀκεῖνο ποιήσας ὅπλον πρὸς τὴν τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἀναίρεσιν καὶ τοῦ δι' αὐτὴν θανάτου, (CCSG 22, 89; *St. Maximus the Confessor: On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert L. Wilken, [Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003], 134).

51 On Christ's assumption of human passibility, see Claire-Agnès Zirnheld, "Le double visage de la passion: malédiction due au péché et/ou dynamisme de la vie: Quaestiones ad Thalassium de s. Maxime le Confesseur XXI, XXII et XLII," *Miscellanea in Honorem Caroli Laga Septuagenarii*, ed. Anton Schoors and Peter van Deun (Louvain: Peeters, 1994), 361–380.

52 Γέγονεν οὖν ὁ θεὸς κατ' ἀλήθειαν ἄνθρωπος καὶ δέδωκεν ἄλλην ἀρχὴν τῇ φύσει δευτέρας γενέσεως, διὰ πόνου πρὸς ἡδονὴν μελλούσης ζωῆς καταλήγουσαν. *qu. Thal.* 61 (CCSG 22: 91; trans. *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 135).

53 τὸν θάνατον· ὅς, ὁπόταν μὴ ἔχῃ γεννῶσαν αὐτὸν μητέρα τήν, ἧς γίνεσθαι πέφυκε τιμωρός, ἡδονήν, ἀϊδίου ζωῆς προδήλως καθίσταται πατήρ. *qu. Thal.* 61 (CCSG 22: 93; trans. *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 135).

> of Christ with the bath of regeneration are able by grace to put off their original Adamic birth based on pleasure.[54]

Christ's "use of death" is not just a model for the Christian. Rather, by virtue of baptism, the Christian enters into Christ's death and continues to participate in it through ascetic practice. In this way, Christians can use their death for the purpose of attaining eternal life. The participatory character of Maximus's asceticism distinguishes him from prior authors who discuss the passions and *apatheia*. Beginning with Clement, they affirm that ascetic practice and divine assistance are necessary for the acquisition of the blessed state of impassibility, but with difficulty show how these two aspects interact. For Maximus, ascetic practice—the willing acceptance of suffering and death—participates in divine assistance; it is itself a participation in Christ's saving mystery and confrontation of the passions. The work of Christ's redemption is interiorized in the heart of every Christian, where the transformation of these passionate states occurs. Maximus summarizes the wondrous exchange wrought by his conversion of passibility in *Question 60*: "By his passion he grants to our nature *apatheia*, and by his sufferings, liberation, and by his death, life eternal."[55]

2.4 *The Interaction of the Personal and Theoretical in* Ad Thalassium

Maximus's use of a medical metaphor to discuss the transformation of the passions does not remain at the level of theory. He applies it to his own life. Early in the *Introduction*, in a plea for humility—a *tropos* of monastic literature—Maximus attempts to evade his friend Thalassius's request to respond to these difficulties: "Certainly not me, who slithers on the ground like another snake, that is of the Ancient Curse, not having any food but the land of the passions."[56] Maximus anticipates the controlling metaphor introduced in *Question 1* throughout the work. Despite his unworthiness, Maximus accepts his friend's request. Like the serpent in the hand of a wise doctor, so Maximus is an instrument in the hands of Christ to elucidate difficulties—spiritual, scriptural, and otherwise—in *Ad Thalassium*. For Maximus and his monastic confreres, the

54 οὕτως διὰ τὸν Χριστόν, τὸν παντελῶς ἀφελόμενον τῆς φύσεως τὸν καθ' ἡδονὴν τῆς γενέσεως νόμον καὶ τοῦ δι' αὐτὸν κατακριθέντος τῆς φύσεως θανάτου τὴν χρῆσιν εἰς μόνην τὴν τῆς ἁμαρτίας κατάκρισιν βουλήσει καταδεξάμενον, πάντες οἱ ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ κατὰ θέλησιν πνεύματι διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας ἀναγεννηθέντες καὶ τὴν καθ' ἡδονὴν προτέραν τοῦ Ἀδὰμ. Ibid. (CCSG 22: 97–99; trans. *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 139).

55 διὰ πάθους γὰρ τὴν ἀπάθειαν καὶ διὰ πόνων τὴν ἄνεσιν καὶ διὰ θανάτου τὴν ἀΐδιον ζωὴν τῇ φύσει δούς. *qu. Thal.* 61 (CCSG 22: 91).

56 μὴ ὅτι γε ἐμοὶ τῷ κατὰ γῆν ἐρριμμένῳ καὶ κατὰ τὸν ὄφιν ἄλλην, ὡς ἡ παλαιὰ κατάρα, μετὰ τὴν γῆν τῶν παθῶν βρῶσιν οὐκ ἔχοντι. *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 19).

Bible is not simply a text they study, but a world they inhabit.[57] For this reason, he moves with great ease between biblical language and normal discourse. Maximus's description of himself as the serpent in Genesis is a clear example of how easily he slips into biblical allusion.

Maximus involves not only himself in the narrative, but also Thalassius, describing him as wholly opposite to Maximus's vermin-like wretchedness. At the beginning of the *Introduction*, he extols Thalassius for his attainment of certain ascetic ideals:

> O man of God, [Thalassius], having separated your soul from the flesh through reason, and having wholly withdrawn your mind by means of the spirit, you have established the soul as the fertile mother of virtues, and the mind you have shown to be the divine, eternal spring of knowledge for the sole purpose of the prudent care of supreme goods. Having made useful the yolking of the soul to the flesh, and having appropriated sense as an instrument to contemplate the grandeur of created realities, in effect, the flesh has received the renown of virtue of the soul in its form impressed upon it through its disposition, manifesting it outwardly so that we might have an image of virtue proposed for imitation: your life.[58]

57 One observes this attitude particularly in *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. For example, Abbot John discusses sincere identification with the characters of the Old Testament, claiming their virtues as his own: "I have been hospitable like Abraham, meek like Moses, holy like Aaron, patient like Job, humble like David, a hermit like John, filled with compunction like Jeremiah, a master like Paul, full of faith like Peter, wise like Solomon … Like the thief I trust that He who of his natural goodness has given me all that, will also grant me the kingdom." *apophth. patr.* (PG 65: 237D–240A). The familiarity with the biblical world sometimes was expressed as an intimacy with the characters of the Bible, who at times seemed spiritually present. Anthony is reported to have dialogued with Moses over a difficult passage. See *apophth. patr.* (PG 65: 84C). On the role of Scripture in emergent monasticism, see Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). For an analysis of the prevalence and significance of memorization of the Bible in monastic biblical culture, see Lorenzo Perrone, "Scripture for a Life of Perfection: the Bible in Late Antique Monasticism: The Case of Palestine," *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity: Proceedings of the Montréal Colloquium in Honour of Charles Kannengiesser 11–13 October 2006*, ed. Lorenzo DiTommaso and Lucian Turcescu (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 393–418.

58 Τῆς σαρκὸς κατὰ τὴν σχέσιν λογικῶς τὴν ψυχὴν ἀποχωρίσας καὶ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ὁλικῶς διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ἐκσπάσας τὸν νοῦν, ἄνθρωπε τοῦ θεοῦ, τὴν μὲν ἀρετῶν κατέστησας μητέρα πολύγονον, τὸν δὲ θείας πηγὴν ἀένναον ἀπέδειξας γνώσεως, εἰς χρῆσιν μόνον τῆς τῶν κρειττόνων οἰκονομίας τὴν πρὸς τὴν σάρκα τῆς ψυχῆς συζυγίαν ποιησάμενος καὶ πρὸς κατανόησιν τῆς τῶν ὁρωμένων μεγαλουργίας ὄργανον κεκτημένος τὴν αἴσθησιν, τὴν μὲν πρακτικῶς διὰ τοῦ ἤθους πρὸς εἶδος τυπούμενον τὸ κατ' ἀρετὴν τῆς ψυχῆς δεχομένην κλέος καὶ τοῖς ἔξω προφαίνουσαν,

Maximus holds up Thalassius as an exemplar of the spiritual life.[59] These characterizations involve Maximus and Thalassius in a greater drama; they are not students debating the finer points of ancient literature. Rather, they are actors engaged in the ascetic struggle on the biblical stage. Here, Maximus establishes Thalassius as a Christian whose life is worthy of imitation. He has "separated his soul from the flesh" and now contemplates the "grandeur of created realities." Maximus's opening description of the sanctified Thalassius characterizes the itinerary of exposition in the *Introduction* insofar as Thalassius reflects the same concepts Maximus uses to discuss his version of *apatheia* at the end of the *Introduction*. There, he explains that *apatheia* consists in separating one's self from sensible reality. Maximus understands separation not as fleeing created matter, but as a reorientation towards it. The one who has achieved *apatheia* can see "the manifestation of sensible reality … as his glory."[60]

When considering *Ad Thalassium* as a whole, these personal aspects woven into the *Introduction* contribute much to the unity of the work. The genre *quaestiones et responsiones* has a long history in biblical exegesis, bringing with it questions about its employment in ancient Christian literature, such as: How do you define the genre? How do the early Christian writers use the genre?[61] Looking at similar works, the genre does not lend itself to structural unity. It merely serves as a pedagogical device to impart information. In approaching *Ad Thalassium*, one should not expect that the genre per se is sufficient to provide structural unity for the work. The argument for unity comes not from the structure, but from Maximus's thinking and writing style. If we take seriously the friendship between Maximus and Thalassius, *Ad Thalassium* serves as evidence of their ongoing conversation and documents their discourse as companions in the monastic life. What on the surface seems to be a

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ἵν' ἔχωμεν ἀρετῆς εἰκόνα, πρὸς μίμησιν προβεβλημένον, τὸν ὑμέτερον βίον, *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 17).

59 Later in *Ad Thalassium*, Maximus also personifies the Church and speaks of it as an exemplar of holiness, witnessing to the virtues and splendor toward which every Christian should strive. See *qu. Thal.* 62 (CCSG 22: 115–143).

60 *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 17).

61 Basic texts on this issue include Gustave Bardy, "La litérature patristique des 'Quaestiones et Responsiones' sur l'Écriture Sainte," *Revue Biblique* 41 (1932): 210–236, 341–369, 515–537; 42 (1933): 14–30, 211–229, 328–352; Lorenzo Perrone, "Sulla preistoria delle 'quaestiones' nella letteratura patristica. Presupposti e sviluppi del genere letterario fino al IV sec.," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 8, no. 2 (1991): 485–505; *Erotapokrseis: Early Christian Question-and-Answer Literature in Context*, ed. Annelie Volgers and Claudio Zamagni (Louvain: Peeters, 2004); Marie-Pierre Brussières, *La litérature des questions et réponses dans l'antiquité profane et chrétienne: de l'enseignement a l'exegèse* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

third-person commentary on Scripture is in reality a first-person account of an individual who is relating to the Word. The struggles of the ascetic life clarify their question-asking. The monks make demands on Scripture to help make sense of what perplexes, torments, or hinders them from attaining holiness. Maximus is misleading when he promises to deal with the passions first in the *Introduction* and then moves on to the scriptural questions. His ascetic preoccupations never leave him and they color the rest of the work. That is why the snake and his venom, obliquely referenced in the *Introduction* and introduced in *Question 1*, slithers in different forms elsewhere in *Ad Thalassium*, where Maximus reintroduces that image to explore the usefulness of the passions in the Christian life.

Question 1 compounds the problem. According to Photius, it was considered part of the ascetic portion of *Ad Thalassium*, along with the *Introduction*. However, Maximus gives a clear scriptural explanation of the utility of the passions at the end of his response:

> Then, if something passionate is predicated in Scripture about God or about the saints: Regarding God, it is said for our sake, to reveal to us through our passions, the salutary and beneficial path of providence for us. Regarding the saints, it is said because in no other way can they explain by corporal language the relations and dispositions of their intellect regarding God, without knowing the passions according to nature.[62]

After Maximus explains the general good use of the passions, he observes a fundamental scriptural difficulty at the heart of Thalassius's question about the passions: What are we to make of the more passionate language of the Bible? According to Maximus, the passionate language used by God and his saints is central to God's communication with man. God's passionate language is effectively "revelatory," a way of meeting the human being in his vernacular. Maximus maintains that even the saints (biblical figures) speak passionately about God and to God because this language is the only tool they have to articulate and enter into the divine mystery. Hence, what started as an ascetical question finishes as an apologia for theological and economic value of the emotional behavior by both God and the saints in Scripture. The juxtaposition

62 Εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ θεοῦ τι τούτων εἴρηται τῇ γραφῇ ἢ ἐπὶ ἁγίων, ἐπὶ μὲν θεοῦ, δι' ἡμᾶς, ὡς ἡμῖν προσφυῶς διὰ τῶν ἡμετέρων παθῶν τὰς σωστικὰς ἡμῶν καὶ ἀγαθουργοὺς τῆς προνοίας προόδους ἐκφαίνοντος, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν ἁγίων, ὡς οὐκ ἄλλως δυναμένων τὰς περὶ θεὸν νοερὰς αὐτῶν σχέσεις τε καὶ διαθέσεις διὰ φωνῆς προενέγκαι σωματικῆς, χωρὶς τῶν ἐγνωσμένων τῇ φύσει παθῶν. *qu. Thal.* 1 (CCSG 7: 49).

of the ascetic life and the biblical revelation quickens Maximus's response. In the ancient world of Christian asceticism, the eradication of the passions went hand in hand with the meditation on Scripture. Yet reflecting on the Bible, a text filled with seemingly passionate language, the monk striving for *apatheia* cannot but recognize the dissonance between the monastic life he lives and the sacred text he reads. This more global scriptural difficulty conditions Maximus's approach both to asceticism and to biblical exegesis. With respect to asceticism, he has to account for the scriptural evidence which shows that human emotion plays an essential role in man's dialogue with God and vice versa. With respect to biblical exegesis, ascetic themes help to clarify Maximus's approach. It befalls Maximus to provide an "anagogical exegesis" of these passages in a way that best suits the mode of the receiver, his friend Abbot Thalassius and his monastic community. *Ad Thalassium* is a unified work insofar as it is a deliberate exposition of the ascetic-biblical world Maximus inhabits, representing in a detached manner his daily experience. I turn now to discuss how Maximus uses this discourse, inherited by his personalized exegetical and ascetical traditions, as it pertains to specific emotional states and scriptural difficulties.

CHAPTER 3

Fear: the Teacher of Eternal Awe

Abstract

Following the previous chapter, which treated human passibility as the thematic frame of Maximus's exegesis in *Ad Thalassium*, the next two chapters consider Maximus's understanding of two cardinal passions, fear and grief. I will provide an overview of the adaption of the Stoic account of fear in early Christian thought, showing the problems and concerns about this emotion that Maximus confronts. From his own critical reflection on Scripture, Maximus argues for a positive place for fear in all stages of the Christian life. Fear exists on a continuum, beginning in its penitential form on Earth, but extending into divine awe in the souls of those in possession of *apatheia*. I will further show how his account of fear has wider consequences for his Christology and anthropology.

1 Between Christian and Stoic Fear

Early Christian thinkers applied the Stoic doctrine of the passions both in continuity and in discontinuity with the classic Stoic position. Christians as the Stoics, inherited the difficulty of distinguishing vicious fear from morally neutral, involuntary reactions to threats. Christians tended to consider fear as appropriate in certain instances. For both the Stoics and most Greek philosophers, the battlefield was the classic test case for the morality of fearfulness. Christians discussed fear in terms of a different warzone: the battlefield of the spiritual life. The expectation of divine judgment formed the Christian attitude toward fear and its role in human perfection. Likewise, biblical interpretation permits a more robust role for fear in the Christian life. Maximus the Confessor inherits this Christianized perspective on Stoic fear and makes it his own. Maximus's account of fear in relation to his understanding of *apatheia* is best seen in light of his Christian forebears. The biblical injunction "to fear the Lord" presses early Christians, especially those with a strong grasp of Stoicism, to interpret this emotion in a positive manner. Maximus develops his account of fear from his deep reflection on earlier Christian discussion, his monastic experience, and his scriptural engagement.

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2 Vicious Fear and Wise Caution

Stoics consistently list fear among the four cardinal passions from which all other passions are derived.[1] Fear is characterized by the physicalized sensation of shrinking before a present object.[2] In the perfected emotional life of the Sage, a corresponding good emotion, caution (εὐλαβεία), supplants its vicious version.[3] Fear presents a problem for Stoics because the passion itself is similar in effect to the morally neutral, prepassionate bites (προπάθειαι), such as sweaty palms, tremors, or tears, when faced with perceived danger.[4] Even the Stoic Sage is subject to these benign sensations. For example, the taut gut of a boxer can take a punch from his opponent, but he is still moved by its force. In the same way, the initial "blow" to the psyche by a sense impression does not constitute an immoral passion. The morality of the reaction consists in the appropriateness to cede to the perceived threat. According to the Stoics, the correlative good emotion to the passion of fear is caution (εὐλαβεία). Thus, it

1 For a list of these cardinal passions and their descriptions, see Stobaeus 2.88–2.90.6, *LS* 65A (1.410–411).

2 Andronicus, *On Passions* 1, *LS* 65B (1.411).

3 For examples of this, see Seneca, *On Anger*, 2.3.1–2.4, *LS* 65X; Gellius 19.1.17–18, 65Y. While these are examples from later Stoic articles, Graver shows evidence of this doctrine in the early Stoa, see Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion.*

4 Aulus Gellius reports a fragment of Epictetus that addresses this problem: "Presentations in the mind … with which the intellect of man is struck as soon as the appearance of something which happens reaches the mind are not voluntary or subject to one's control; but by a force of their own which they press themselves on men to be acknowledged. But the assents … by which the same presentations are acknowledged are voluntary and occur subject to human control. Therefore, when some frightening sound from the sky or a collapsing building or the sudden announcement of some danger, or something else of the sort, occurs it is inevitable that even a Sage's soul be moved for a short while and be contracted and grow pale, not because he has formed an opinion of anything evil but because of certain rapid and unreflective movements which forestall the proper function of the intellect and reason. Soon, though, the Sage in question does not give assent to such presentations but he rejects and refuses them and judges that there is nothing in them to be feared. And they say that the difference between the mind of the Sage and the fool is that the fool thinks that the violent and harsh presentations which first strike the mind really are as they seem; and he also confirms with his own assent these initial reactions, just as though they really were to be feared … whereas the Sage, when has been affected briefly and in a limited fashion in his color and expression, does not assent but retains the condition and strength of the opinion which he always had about such presentations, as things not at all worthy of being feared which try to frighten us with a false show and empty dread." Gellius, *Attic Nights* 19.1, preserving Epictetus's *Fragment* 9 (*Attic Nights, Volume III: Books 14–20.*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 212 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927], 353–355). For relevant comment on this passage and its relation to Stoic psychology of the passions, see Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action*, 177–181; Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 85–108.

follows that there are instances when one could exercise legitimate restraint before the threat of danger.[5]

3 Clement and Origen: Discerning the Boundaries between Virtuous and Vicious Fear

Christians inherited the dilemma about the appropriateness of fear and consider it in their biblical interpretation. Faced with this problem, Clement of Alexandria articulates the tension between fear in Scripture and fear in the Stoic tradition and offers his own clarification: "They say that fear is an irrational aberration, and perturbation of mind. What do you say? And how can this definition be any longer maintained, seeing the commandment is given me by the Word?"[6] Clement argues for utility of fear exegetically, providing a string of biblical *loci* to support his claim for fear's positive role in the Christian life.[7] After examining the evidence in Scripture, Clement responds with Stoic categories. He describes the healthy type of Christian fear as "rational," and uses the Stoic term "caution" (εὐλαβεία).[8]

Clement considers fear pedagogical, a step toward educating the Christian on the way to perfection. Fear therefore disappears in the saintly "gnostic." For example, in his discussion of Romans 3–8, Clement distinguishes between two

5 Interestingly, in the Stoic account, courage is not the correlative εὐπαθεία to fear. Graver argues that courage, as a correlative to fear in the Stoic framework, could have been a part of a now lost, alternative tradition of the Stoic doctrine. See Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 213–220.

6 *str.* 2.7 (SC 38: 59). See also Spanneut, "Le stoïcisme des pères de l'église," 257–258.

7 To support his claim about proper fear in the Christian life, Clement cites in rapid succession: Prov 1:7, Rom 3:20, Gal 3:20, Jth. 8:27, Is 5:21. On Clement's use of Scripture in his argumentation, see Judith L. Kovacs, "Clement as Scriptural Exegete: Overview and History of Research," in *Clement's Biblical Exegesis: Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, May 29–31, 2014)*, ed. Veronika Vernuskova, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 12ff.

8 Clement's concession to the Stoic term of "caution" is more of a sarcastic jab to philosophers, perhaps alluding to the Stoic distinction between φόβος and εὐλαβεία as being simply a semantic difference in language, but not an essential difference in concept. "Fear is not then irrational. It is therefore rational. How could it be otherwise, exhorting as it does, You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness? But if they will quibble about the names, let the philosophers term the fear of the law cautious fear (εὐλάβεια), which is an avoidance (ἔκκλισις) agreeable to reason … [these philosophers] are not inaptly called fighters about names (ὀνοματομάκοι). The commandment, then, has already appeared fair and lovely even in the highest degree, when conceived under a change of name. Cautious fear (εὐλάβεια) is therefore shown to be reasonable, being the shunning of what hurts." *str.* 2.7 (SC 38: 59–60; trans. ANF 2, 354–355).

kinds of Christian works (ἔργα): those done by "slaves" out of fear and those performed by adopted "sons" or gnostics out of love for God.[9] Fear is absent since the gnostic Christian possesses love, the crown of all virtues.[10] Hence, Clement relegates a positive sense of fear to an inferior state of Christian living. Fear simply prepares us for *apatheia* and love blots out any trace of fear in Clement's vision of Christian perfection.[11]

Origen uses precise Stoic terminology to explore Christ's experience in the Garden of Gethsemane to explore the difference between legitimate and sinful fear. In his *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, Origen considers Christ's reaction to his eventual betrayal and Crucifixion as pre-passionate bites and not fear itself.[12] Origen does so to uphold the perfection of Christ's soul. Consistent on this point, Origen denies genuine turmoil in the soul of Christ in *On First Principles*:

> Now that [Christ] possessed a soul, the Savior himself most clearly proves in the gospels when he says: "No one takes from me my soul, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again."[13] And again: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death"[14] and also: "now my soul is troubled."[15] For the soul that is "sorrowful" and "troubled" must not be understood to be the Word of God, because with the authority of his godhead he says: "I have power to lay down my soul."[16] Nor do we say that the Son of God was in that soul in the same way as he was in the soul of Paul or of Peter and the rest of the saints.[17]

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9 See *str.* 7.13.82 (SC 428: 250–252), cf. 6.7.60. For the anti-Valentinian context of Clement's argumentation, see Judith L. Kovacs, "Reading the 'Divinely Inspired' Paul: Clement of Alexandria in conversation with heterodox Christians, Simple Believers, and Greek Philosophers," *Clement's Biblical Exegesis*, 330.

10 *str.* 7.11.12 (SC 428: 216); 7.12.72 (SC 428: 224). That fear is absent because the presence of love is similar to Clement's exclusion of desire from the perfected Christian. The gnostic possesses the object of his desire and has no need of the emotion any longer.

11 On Clement's biblical defense of *apatheia* as the goal of the Christian life, see Judith L. Kovacs, "Saint Paul as Apostle of Apatheia; Stromateis VII: Chapter 14," in *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis: Proceedings of the Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria* (*Olomouc, October 21–23, 2010*), eds. Matyas Havrda, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 199–216.

12 *Comm. in Matt.* 92 (GCS 38: 205–206). For comment on Origen's position in relationship to Stoicism, see Graver *Stoicism and Emotion*, 102–108 and Richard A. Layton, "Propatheia: Origen and Didymus on the Origin of the Passions," 262–282.

13 Jn 10:18.

14 Mt 26:38.

15 Jn 12:27.

16 Jn 10:18.

17 *princ.* 4.4.4 (SC 268: 408–412; trans. Butterworth, 421–422).

Origen's reticence to ascribe full-blooded fear to Jesus before his betrayal defends the Son's divinity against the accusation of imperfection. Furthermore, Origen's position suggests that fear as an emotion belongs to the fallen world and does not lay its hold on the Son of God's perfected humanity and, as a consequence, our own realized perfection. For Origen, the goal of all the saints is *apatheia*, given by the grace of God and accepted through ascetic practice.[18] Together with Clement, fear has no part in *apatheia*, whether in Christ or the Christian.

4 Gregory of Nyssa and Origen: Fear as a Threat to Epekstasis

Gregory takes a strong stance against fear's place in the perfected Christian life. Commenting on the Song of Songs, he writes: "When love has entirely cast out fear, and fear has been transformed into love, then the unity brought us by our savior will be fully realized, for all human beings will be united with one another through their union with the one supreme Good."[19] Gregory teaches that, in union with the divine, fear ultimately cedes to love. Furthermore, fear for Gregory is an impediment both to union with God and with others. Gregory's position on fear is understood in light of his account of *epekstasis* or perpetual progress.[20] On this view, Gregory envisions progression in the spiritual life as a continual expansion toward the divine meeting an infinite God with an infinite desire for him. Shrinking or recoiling in fear would thwart the always-progressing, eternal movement that is key to Gregory's mystical and eschatological vision.

Gregory's views on fear and *epekstasis* are best understood against Origen's doctrine of the Fall and the related problem of eternal return.[21] Origen describes the original Fall as a cooling from the love of God: "As therefore God

18 *sel. in Ps.* 17 (PG 12: 1232D–1233A). See Spanneut, "L'apatheia chrétienne," 260–264. Crouzel thinks Origen distances himself from Clement's position on *apatheia*, claiming that Origen holds something like the Aristotelian position of virtue as the mean. See Henri Crouzel, *Origen: The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian*, trans. A. S. Worrall (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 52.

19 *hom in cant.* 15 (GNO 6: 466–468).

20 *v. Mos.* 2.225–230 (GNO 7.1: 112–114). The classic treatment of Gregory's doctrine of *epekstasis* is Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique: essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Augier: Éditions Montaigne, 1944). See also Claudio Moreschini, *I Padri Cappadoci*, 327–346. One of the most recent attempts to interpret Gregory of Nyssa's concept of *epekstasis* in the context of his moral psychology is J. Warren Smith, *Passion and Paradise*, 104–125.

21 See Otis, "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System," 101–103.

is 'fire' and the angels 'a flame of fire' and the saints are all 'fervent in spirit,' so on the contrary those who have fallen away from the love of God must undoubtedly be said to have cooled in their affection for him and to have become cold."[22] Using a common etymology, Origen considers whether the word "soul" (ψυχή) is related to the verb "to cool" (ψύχεσθαι).[23] He argues that the Christian grows in his sanctification and union with God through participation in Christ. When divine unity is achieved, Origen says:

> When after many struggles we have been able to attain to it we ought so to continue that no satiety of that blessing may ever possess us; but the more we partake of its blessedness, the more may the loving desire for it deepen and increase within us, as ever our hearts grow in fervor and eagerness to receive and hold fast the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.[24]

On this view, our desire continually deepens before the unmediated presence of the Holy Trinity. Yet, his position contains the veiled hint of the possibility of "satiety" that may lead the soul to regress. In other words, the soul could grow bored or become "filled" with the divine presence.[25] To prevent a second Fall, Origen holds that any decline vis-à-vis satiety would be gradual and therefore correctable before one falls too far away from God.[26]

Gregory responds to the problem of satiety in his *Life of Moses*. He describes spiritual ascent in reference to Paul's Letter to the Philippians, arguing that the soul moves "by its desire of the heavenly things (τῇ τῶν οὐρανίων ἐπιθυμίᾳ) 'straining (συνεπεκτεινομένη) ahead for what is still to come.'"[27] Gregory teaches

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22 *princ.* 2.8.3 (SC 252: 342–344; trans. Butterworth, 155).

23 "We must ask whether perhaps even the word soul, which in Greek is *psyche*, was not formed from *psychesthai*, with the idea of growing cold after having been in a diviner and better state, and whether it was not derived from thence because the soul seems to have grown cold by the loss of its first natural and divine warmth and on that account to have been placed in its present state with its present designation." Ibid. (trans. Butterworth, 156). Though Origen's reasons for the etymology are theological, not medical, the relationship between "cooling" and "soul" is seen elsewhere. See Aristotle *De anima* 1.2.405b; Plato *Cratylus* 399 D–E; Tertullian *De anima* 25, 27.

24 *princ.* 1.3.8 (SC 252: 164; trans. Butterworth, 50).

25 The problem with Origen's concept of "satiety" is that it rests on Origen's postulate that God is finite. See Otis, "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System," 102 n11; Smith, *Passion and Paradise*, 111–115. Of course, Nyssa postulates infinity in God, which forms the basis for his doctrine of *epekstasis*. For a recent treatment of this subject, see Albert-Kees Geljon, "Divine Infinity in Gregory of Nyssa and Philo of Alexandria," *Vigiliae Christianae* 59, no. 2 (2005): 152–177.

26 *princ.* 1.3.8.

27 *v. Mos.* 2.225, cf. Phil 3:13. (GNO 7.1: 112; trans. Malherbe—Ferguson, 115).

that the soul is created for this continual expansion of divine desire. He uses the example of Moses, who never "stopped his ascent," but remains wanting: "He is still unsatisfied in his desire for more. He still thirsts for that with which he constantly filled himself to capacity and he asks to attain as if he had never partaken, beseeching God to appear to him, not according to his capacity to partake, but according to God's true being."[28] Gregory gives reason for Moses's insatiability elsewhere. In his *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, Gregory contends that man's desire continually expands to receive God in his infinity because of the infinite nature of God.[29] In other words, Gregory talks about satiety explicitly: "The enjoyment [of the divine] never curtails desire through satiety (τῷ κόρῳ), but rather feeds desire through participation in what is that which is desired."[30] On the basis of Gregory's well-established spiritual doctrine of continual ascent, one can see his reticence to accept fear as a spiritual virtue, for it risks new potential lapses that he observes in Origen's conception of the consummation of all things. Hence, for Gregory fear has no place in the ecstatic, perfected Christian's soul.

5 Evagrius and the Monastic Value of Fear

Thus far, these early Christian authors consider the fear of God a serious part of the beginnings of Christian life, but ultimately unnecessary among the perfect. Evagrius, one of Maximus's principal influences, disagrees. Evagrius does not name fear among his principal vices or *logismoi*. Instead, he consistently discusses fear of the Lord in the positive sense. In *Ad monachos*, Evagrius follows the Book of Wisdom and aligns fear of the Lord with faith: "Fear of the Lord begets wisdom, faith in Christ grants fear of the Lord."[31] Likewise, Evagrius admonishes monks who fear insects more than God, supporting his jab with scriptural citation: "How is it that you foolishly ignore the fear of him which is beyond all measure and you fear instead mosquitoes and roaches? Have you

28 Ibid., 2. 227. (GNO 7.1: 113; trans. Malherbe—Ferguson, 115); cf. 2.230. (trans. Malherbe—Ferguson, 116).

29 *hom. in Cant.* 8 (GNO 6: 245–246). Gregory describes this process again in the context of Phil 3:13.

30 *hom. in Cant.* 14 (GNO 6: 425).

31 *Ad monachos* 69 (ACW 59: 57). Jeremy Driscoll argues that for Evagrius "fear of the Lord" and faith are interchangeable concepts or at least mutually strengthen one another. See *Evagrius Ponticus: Ad monachos* (Mahwah: Newman, 2003), 103 and 75 n10. Cf. *Ad monachos*, 4 "The fear of the Lord watches over the soul; loving self-control strengthens it." (ACW 59: 41).

not heard Moses tell you: 'The Lord your God shall you fear,'[32] or again: 'Whom they dread and fear in the presence of his power'[33] ?"[34]

Evagrius teaches that the fear of God permeates all stages of the Christian life.[35] Evagrius extols fear of God both in experiences of trial and of tranquility: "If you remember the Judge only when you are in difficulties as One who inspires fear and who is incorruptibly honest, then you have not as yet learned to 'serve the Lord in fear and to rejoice in him with trembling.'[36] For understand this point well: one is to worship him even in spiritual relaxations and in times of good cheer with even more piety and reverence."[37] Hence, for Evagrius, *apatheia* springs forth from the soul well tended by the fear of God: "The fear of God strengthens faith, my son, and continence in turn strengthens this fear. Patience and hope make this latter virtue solid beyond all shaking and they also give birth to *apatheia*."[38]

6 Concluding Assessments on the Prior Tradition on Fear

While Clement values the role fear can play at the beginning stages of Christian living, he ultimately holds that the perfected Christian has no need for fear. Origen and Gregory of Nyssa follow suit to defend their commitments to various points of view: Origen wishes to uphold Christ's perfect humanity and Gregory wants to defend his account of perpetual progress in the spiritual life. By contrast, Evagrius's vision includes the fear of God as the basis of his ascetic teaching, and the diligent monk is expected to maintain this character of fear, awe, and reverence throughout his ascetical progress. However, Evagrius's teaching lies mainly in laconic sayings or *apothegmata* directed toward his monks. Without any extended discourse, we are left without a reason for his view, other than the obvious biblical prescriptions and the monastic praxis that promotes vigilance as a spiritual virtue.

Maximus inherits these positions and engages them. Thoroughly monastic, he sides with Evagrius, maintaining that fear of God has an essential role to

32 Dt 6:13.

33 Ex 15:15.

34 *De oratione* 100 (SC 589: 316; trans. J. E. Bamberger, 72).

35 On the levels of spiritual progression in Evagrius, see Jeremy Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Progression: Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus* (Mahwah: Newman, 2015), 11–37.

36 Ps 2:11.

37 *De oratione* 143 (SC 589: 356; trans. J. E. Bamberger, 78).

38 *Praktikos* Intro. (SC 171: 492; trans. J. E. Bamberger, 14).

play at all levels of the Christian life. However, Maximus goes further by exploring the various biblical *loci* on fear in *Ad Thalassium*, where he explains his rationale for his commitment: fear exists and is transmuted as an essential element in the soul of the perfected Christian. Maximus distinguishes himself from Origen and Gregory in the debate about how the perfected can be said to remain in the divine presence by prescribing an ample role to fear, both in this world and in the world to come.

7 The Ascetic Background of Maximus's Teaching on Fear

Maximus's teaching on fear is ultimately derived from his monastic experience and likely in direct reference to Evagrius.[39] In his early ascetic literature, he prescribes fear of God as a way to build up key monastic virtues, such as vigilance (νήψις)[40] or compunction (κατάνυξις).[41] Referring to the fear of God, he acknowledges two levels of fear in his earlier ascetic writings. In his *Centuries on Love*, he relays the following: "*Apatheia* gives birth to love: Hope in God gives birth to *apatheia*; patience and longsuffering give birth to hope; total self-mastery engenders these things; fear of God engenders self-mastery and hope in the Lord engenders fear."[42]

Hope gives rise to *apatheia*, but to arrive at *apatheia* requires the cultivation of several monastic virtues: patience, longsuffering, and self-mastery. At the

39 Marcus Plested's words are apt here: "It is inadequate and potentially misleading to speak of the ascetic tradition as an 'influence' on Maximus the Confessor. The term 'influence' conventionally betokens a more or less passive adoption of external ideas, concepts, and intellectual frameworks—much as one might succumb to the dreaded *influenza*, or 'flu.' The ascetic traditions of the Christian East constitute, rather, the indispensable and inescapable foundation of the Confessor's life, work, and teaching. There is nothing in Maximus's oeuvre that is not grounded in lived monastic experience, not animated by the vast and rich ascetic legacy of the Christian East." Plested, "The Ascetic Tradition," in *OHMC*, 164.

40 "'I entreat you, then, Father: tell me how I ought to lay hold on vigilance?' The old man answered: 'Complete lack of concern for earthly things and continuous meditation on the divine Scriptures brings the soul to fear of God: and the fear of God brings vigilance.'" *ascet.* 18 (CCSG 40: 39; trans. Sherwood, 113, adapted).

41 "Then the brother said: 'Father, why do I have no compunction (κατάνυξιν)?' And the old man answered: 'because there is no fear of God before our eyes, because we have become the resting place of all evils, and, for that reason, we scorn as a mere thought the dreadful judgment of God.'" *ascet.* 27 (CCSG 40: 53; trans. Sherwood, 118).

42 Ἀγάπην μὲν τίκτει ἀπάθεια· ἀπάθειαν δέ, ἡ εἰς Θεὸν ἐλπίς· τὴν δὲ ἐλπίδα, ὑπομονὴ καὶ μακροθυμία· ταύτας δέ, ἡ περιεκτικὴ ἐγκράτεια· ἐγκράτειαν δέ, ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ φόβος· τὸν δὲ φόβον, ἡ εἰς τὸν Κύριον πίστις. *car.* 1.2 (*Capitoli sulla carità*, ed. Aldo Ceresa Gastaldo, 50; PG 90: 961B).

root, hope in the Lord cultivates the fear of God and from these things all other virtues develop. As we have seen already with Evagrius, a certain holy fear is "natural" in the monastic context. "Hope in the Lord" describes someone striving to live continually in the presence of the Lord through prayer, fasting, and vigils. The monastic life conditions all other activities. One notes especially the Evagrian background to this passage.[43] It is almost certainly derived from Evagrius's teaching on *apatheia* in the *Praktikos*, who likewise speaks about *apatheia* as the offspring of love:

> Love is the child of *apatheia*; *apatheia* is the flower of *praxis*; the keeping of the commandments constitutes *praxis*. Fear of God is the guardian of these things, which is the child of upright faith. Faith is an integral good, which exists naturally in those who have not yet believed in God.[44]

Evagrius sees fear of God as the guardian of the basic elements of Christian *praxis*, which is his technical language for keeping the commandments. Since no Christian is ever absolved from keeping the divine law, it follows that fear of God is a continual part of the Christian life. For both writers, attention to the Lord—in Evagrius, faith,[45] and in Maximus, hope—instills this character of awe that aids in the rising up of these other Christian virtues, the flower of which is *apatheia*.

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43 The Evagrian influence on Maximus's ascetic teaching is well known. See the essential articles: Marcel Viller, "Aux sources de la spiritualité de saint Maxime: les œuvres d'Evagre le Pontique," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 11 (1930): 156–84, 239–68, 331–6; Irénée Hausherr, "Ignorance infinie," in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 2 (1936): 351–362. More recently, see Julia Konstantinovsky, "Evagrius Ponticus and Maximus the Confessor: The Building of the Self in Praxis and Contemplation," in *Evagrius and His Legacy*, ed. Joel Kalvesmaki and Robin Darling Young (South Bend: Notre Dame Press, 2016), 128–153. Marcus Plested has reviewed the earlier literature of Viller and Hausherr, claiming that the Evagrian influence on Maximus happens "largely on the level of form, not of substance." See "The Ascetic Tradition," in *OHMC*, 164–176, esp. 166.

44 I offer the Greek here to demonstrate the similarity between Maximus and Evagrius's language: Ἀπαθείας ἔγγονον ἀγάπη· ἀπάθεια δέ ἐστιν ἄνθος τῆς πρακτικῆς· πρακτικὴν δὲ συνίστησιν ἡ τήρησις τῶν ἐντολῶν· τούτων δὲ φύλαξ ὁ φόβος τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅστις γέννημα τῆς ὀρθῆς ἐστι πίστεως· πίστις δέ ἐστιν ἐνδιάθετον ἀγαθόν, ἥτις ἐνυπάρχειν πέφυκε καὶ τοῖς μηδέπω πεπιστευκόσι Θεῷ. *Praktikos* 81 (SC 171: 670).

45 Evagrius makes a distinction between upright faith (ἡ ὀρθή πίστη) and faith which is an inert good (πίστις δέ ἐστιν ἐνδιάθετον ἀγαθόν). He seems to be drawing a distinction similar to the medieval concept of the content of Christian faith (*fides quae*) and the human act of faith (*fides qua*).

Maximus's ascetic life also conditions his position on the status of fear for Christians, both on the way to and in the state of perfection. Fear is threaded through the entirety of Christian life, much like Evagrius, but in contrast to Clement, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa. In the *Centuries on Charity*, Maximus holds that fear of God engenders a similar taxonomy of virtues, ending in *apatheia*, as we have seen above. He also introduces two types of fear, a theme he explores throughout his works:

> Fear of God is twofold. One is born in us by threats of punishment, through which self-mastery, patience, hope in God, and *apatheia*—out of which comes love—are engendered in us in this order. The other fear is joined with love itself, which constantly creates caution in the soul so that the soul might not enter into contempt for God through the freedom of love.[46]

Maximus considers two fears: the first is propaedeutic and it manifests as fear of divine punishment. The second is aligned with charity. In the above passage, Maximus argues that holy fear in this world—described as "caution" (εὐλάβεια)—acts as a check to love, in order that the diligent Christian would neither forget the awesomeness of the divine nor act freely and out of turn. As we will discuss later in our examination of *Question 10*, Maximus deepens the alignment of fear with love for reasons specific to his eschatological vision—holy fear maintains love's intensity.

Maximus brings up this twofold fear again in his *Questions and Doubts*, this time to make sense of differing accounts of fear in the psalms:

> *Question 138*: What is the passage from the Psalm, "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice exceedingly in him with trembling"[47] and how is one able, at the same time, both to tremble and to rejoice exceedingly; and how, again in Psalm 19, does it say, "Fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever,"[48] whereas John says, "Love casts out fear?"[49]

46 Διττός ἐστιν ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ φόβος· ὁ μὲν ἐκ τῶν ἀπειλῶν τῆς κολάσεως ἡμῖν ἐντικτόμενος, δι' ὃν ἡ ἐγκράτεια καὶ ἡ ὑπομονὴ καὶ ἡ εἰς Θεὸν ἐλπὶς καὶ ἡ ἀπάθεια, ἐξ ἧς ἡ ἀγάπη, κατὰ τάξιν ἡμῖν ἐγγίνονται· ὁ δὲ αὐτῇ τῇ ἀγάπῃ συνέζευκται, εὐλάβειαν τῇ ψυχῇ ἀεὶ ἐμποιῶν, ἵνα μὴ διὰ τὴν τῆς ἀγάπης παρρησίαν εἰς καταφρόνησιν Θεοῦ ἔλθῃ. *car.* 1.81 (*Capitoli sulla carità*, ed. Aldo Ceresa Gastaldo, 80).

47 Ps 2:11.

48 Ps 18:10.

49 1 Jn 4:18.

> *Response*: Fear is twofold: one kind is related to accusations; the other is in proportion to the worth of the one who is loved. And so, love puts aside the fear that results from accusations while it preserves that fear that is based upon the worth of the one who is loved.[50]

Again, Maximus replays the same duplicate structure. The two fears differ in relation to their object and are perfected in love. Three points arise from Maximus's teaching on fear in his ascetical literature. First, fear of God conditions growth in virtues in the Christian life. Second, his distinction between two types of fear is consistent; there is a temporary fear associated with maturity in our Christianity, and a fear that forms part of the psyche of the perfect. Third, this higher form of fear is associated with love and interacts with love in order keep it in perfect line.

8 Temporal and Eternal Fear in *Ad Thalassium*

In *Ad Thalassium*, Maximus builds on his earlier, brief thoughts on fear and elaborates his position in *Question 10*, responding to the following question: "If 'the one who fears is not perfected in love,'[51] why 'is there no lack for those who fear him?'[52] If there is no deficiency, it is clear that it is perfected. How, then, is the one who fears not perfect?"[53] The question deals with two interrelated problems: lexical and moral. On the one hand, Thalassius points to internal conflicts within the biblical text about the status of fear, as he does elsewhere in his corpus.[54] On the other hand, monastic curiosities about the role of fear in

50 Τί ἐστιν τὸ τοῦ ψαλμοῦ «δουλεύσατε τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν φόβῳ καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε αὐτῷ ἐν τρόμῳ» καὶ πῶς ἐστιν ἐν ταὐτῷ δυνατὸν καὶ τρέμειν καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθαι καὶ πῶς πάλιν ἐν τῷ ιη λέγει «ὁ φόβος κυρίου ἁγνός, διαμένων εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος», ὁ δὲ Ἰωάννης φησὶν «ἡ ἀγάπη ἔξω βάλλει τὸν φόβον» καὶ εἰ ἔξω βάλλεται πῶς διαμένει; Διττὸς ὁ φόβος· ὁ μὲν ἐπὶ ἐγκλήμασιν, ὁ δὲ κατ' ἀξίαν τοῦ ἀγαπωμένου· ἡ οὖν ἀγάπη τὸν ἐπὶ ἐγκλήμασιν φόβον ἀποτίθεται, τὸν δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀξίας τοῦ ἀγαπωμένου συντηρεῖ. Ἀγαλλίασις δέ ἐστιν ἡ ἐπὶ κτήσει τινῶν ἐπίχαρτος διάθεσις, εὐφροσύνη δὲ ἡ ἐπὶ τῶν κτηθέντων ἀπόλαυσις εὐφροσύνη δὲ ἡ ἐπὶ τῶν κτηθέντων ἀπόλαυσις. *qu. dub.* 138 (CCSG 10: 98; trans. D. Prassas, 113–114).

51 1 Jn 4:18.

52 Ps 33:10.

53 Εἰ ὁ φοβούμενος οὐ τετελείωται ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ, πῶς οὐκ ἔστιν ὑστέρημα τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτόν; Ἐὰν οὐκ ἔστιν ὑστέρημα, δῆλον ὅτι τετελείωται. Πῶς οὖν ὁ φοβούμενος οὐ τετελείωται; *qu. Thal.* 10 (CCSG 7: 83).

54 Cf. *qu. dub.* 138. Blowers speculates that some of these biblical difficulties—like fear in *qu Thal.* 10—could be "deployed artificially by monastic teachers to obviate prospective

Christian life add to the importance of the interpretation of these passages. In the beginning of his response, Maximus describes a threefold hierarchy of progression in the Christian life—the beginners, the advanced, and the perfect—a trope of early Christian literature.[55] However, Maximus modifies the classical threefold scheme, naming the beginners "the fearful ones (φοβουμένοι)":

> The beautiful arrangement of the Divine Scriptures, according to the saving bond of the Spirit, distinguishes the degrees of the movements from the multiplicity of exterior passions toward divine unity, the ones who, being led into the gateway of the divine courts of the virtues, are called "fearful ones."[56]

In describing beginners in the faith in this way, Maximus emphasizes that fear effectively nurtures progression toward the divine. For Maximus, fear deters humans from sin at the initial stages of the Christian path:

> Therefore, the one who fears the Lord, who, because of fear (διὰ τὸν φόβον) has turned away from the old, destructive life of the passions, and commits his entire disposition to the divine commandments, does not lack any of the goods that befit the beginner, even if he has not acquired virtuous habit.[57]

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misinterpretations or to expound moral or spiritual doctrine." See *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy*, 61; for his comments on *Question 10* in light of the ascetic tradition, see 58–60. However, it could be equally argued that the prior ascetic tradition forms the interpretive key to resolve the tensions of the biblical text.

55 Beginning with Hippolytus's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, the books attributed to Solomon—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs—represent the threefold division of man's progression in philosophy—ἐθική, φυσική, and θεολογία respectively. Origen and Gregory likewise deploy this interpretation in their introduction to their own commentaries on the Song of Songs. Evagrius develops a threefold definition that becomes a classic trope of Byzantine spiritual literature—πρακτική, φυσική, θεολογική. Cf. Tomas Špidlik, *La spiritualité de l'orient chrétien: manuel systématique* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1978), 69–73. For Maximus's relationship with this prior tradition, see Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 331–336.

56 Ἡ καλὴ τῶν θείων γραφῶν εὐταξία, κατὰ τὸν σωστικὸν τοῦ πνεύματος θεσμὸν τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκτὸς κατὰ τὰ πάθη πληθύος ἐπὶ τὴν θείαν ἑνότητα κινουμένων τοὺς βαθμοὺς διορίζουσα, τοὺς μὲν εἰσαγομένους καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ πρόπυλά που τυγχάνοντας τῆς θείας αὐλῆς τῶν ἀρετῶν φοβουμένους ἐκάλεσεν. *qu. Thal.* 10 (CCSG 7: 83).

57 οὖν ὁ φοβούμενος τὸν κύριον, ἀπεστρεμμένος διόλου τὴν κατὰ τὴν φθορὰν τῶν παθῶν ἀρχαίαν ἀναστροφὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἑαυτοῦ τὴν διάθεσιν διὰ τὸν φόβον ἐκδεδωκὼς τοῖς θείοις προστάγμασι, ὑστερεῖ τινος καλοῦ τῶν εἰσαγομένοις πρεπόντων, κἂν οὔπω τὴν ἐν ἀρεταῖς ἕξιν ἐκτήσατο. Ibid.

Maximus considers this propaedeutic fear as a genuine good. This is important to note, because according to modern sensibilities, hierarchy might mean that lower levels are deficient from the higher ones. However, in Maximus's view, the hierarchy of progression does not mean that a lower state would deprive anyone of goods for salvation.[58] For this reason, Maximus reassures his reader that the beginner does not lack any good belonging to his state.

Though Maximus identifies fear as the first stage, it does not belong solely to this aspect of existence. Like Evagrius, Maximus aligns fear of the Lord with the execution of the daily efforts of Christianity. Maximus writes:

> And again, those who courageously follow practical philosophy, but not having detached their soul from fear and the memory of the future divine judgments, let them be known to us as "the fearful ones." For, according to the blessed David, they lack nothing at all of those who fight for truth against the opposing power.[59]

Adding to this notion, Maximus maintains this Evagrian sense of fear of the Lord as the simple practice of the commandments[60] and the content of Christian praxis.[61] Hence for Maximus, fear accompanies the entirety of Christian life, since at no point in any orthodox Christian hierarchy of stages in the spiritual life are there exemptions from keeping the divine law.

Thus far, the emotion of fear has been considered from the point of view of finite, creaturely existence. Maximus's continued exegesis in *Question 10* reflects on the eternal status of fear, drawing from other biblical *loci* regarding the emotion.

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58 Ibid. Larchet notes that Maximus considers the dispensation of grace to each is in proportion to their dignity: "Les hommes divinisés le sont donc différemment ou à degrés divers." *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, 648. He claims that this analogical character of Maximus's teaching on divinization draws on the work of Dionysius. See id. 647–651.

59 Καὶ πάλιν οἱ μὲν τὴν πρακτικὴν ἀνδρικῶς μετιόντες φιλοσοφίαν, φόβου καὶ μνήμης τῶν μελλόντων θείων δικαιωτηρίων οὔπω τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπολύσαντες, νοείσθωσαν ἡμῖν οἱ φοβούμενοι, μηδενὸς μὲν κατὰ τὸν μακάριον Δαυὶδ ὑστεροῦντες καθάπαξ τῶν ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας ἀγωνιζομένων κατὰ τῆς ἀντικειμένης δυνάμεως. *qu. Thal.* 10 (CCSG 7: 83).

60 ὁ νοῦς, ἐφ' ὅσον ἔχει ζῶσαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ μνήμην, διὰ τῆς θεωρίας ἐκζητεῖ τὸν κύριον, καὶ οὐχ ἁπλῶς, ἀλλ' ἐν φόβῳ κυρίου, τουτέστιν ἐν τῇ πράξει τῶν ἐντολῶν. *qu. Thal.* 47 (CCSG 7, 339). On the notion of *praxis* in Maximus, see the recent study of Joshua Lollar, *To See into the Life of Things*, 203–252; see also Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, 451–481. On the concept more generally in the Christian East, see Spidlik, *La spiritualité de l'orient chrétien*, 177–182.

61 Ibid.

> There are two meanings of fear according to the passages: "Rather fear him who can destroy the body and soul in Gehenna,"[62] and "The fear of the Lord is holy and endures from age to age,"[63] and "Fearsome and great is he to all those who surround him."[64] Must one seek to understand how "love casts out fear"[65] if it remains from age to age? How shall God remain fearsome in eternal life for all those who surround him?[66]

On the basis of these passages, Maximus returns to his familiar twofold distinction of fear, this time calling it unholy and holy.[67] "Unholy" fear does not mean sinful. Rather, it belongs to the creaturely world and owes its origin to sin. Maximus holds that this version of fear disappears along with one's own sin through repentance. In contrast, holy fear "subsists eternally (ἀεὶ συνεστώς)" and "will at no point disappear (οὐκ ἀπογενήσεταί ποτε)."[68] This type of fear has God as its object, not the memory of faults. Maximus claims that this higher version of fear is a natural way for creatures to maintain relationship with God. "In a certain sense, [holy fear] is truly fixed by nature on God (οὐσιωδῶς ἐμπέφυκέ πως τῷ θεῷ)."[69] Elsewhere, fear of the Lord is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who assures the practice of the commandments and our progress toward divine life.[70] Such fear is appropriate before divine

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62 Mt 10:28.

63 Ps 18:10.

64 Ps 88:8.

65 1 Jn 4:18.

66 Ἐπειδὴ δὲ διττός ἐστιν ὁ φόβος κατὰ τὸ φοβήθητε δὲ μᾶλλον τὸν δυνάμενον καὶ σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴν ἀπολέσαι ἐν γεέννῃ, καὶ κατὰ τὸ ὁ φόβος κυρίου ἁγνός, διαμένων εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος, καὶ μέγας καὶ φοβερός ἐστιν ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς περικύκλῳ αὐτοῦ, ζητητέον πῶς ἔξω βάλλει τὸν φόβον ἡ ἀγάπη, εἴπερ εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος διαμένει, πῶς δὲ φοβερὸς ἔσται διαμένων ὁ θεὸς εἰς τοὺς ἀπείρους αἰῶνας ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς περικύκλῳ αὐτοῦ. *qu. Thal.* 10 (CCSG 7: 85).

67 Cf. *car.* 1.81 (*Capitoli sulla carità*, ed. Aldo Ceresa Gastaldo, 80); *qu. dub.* 138 (CCSG 10: 98).

68 Ἤ μᾶλλον, ἐπειδή, καθὼς ἔφην, διττός ἐστιν ὁ φόβος, ὁ μὲν ἁγνὸς ὁ δὲ οὐχ ἁγνός—οἷον, ὁ μὲν ἐπὶ πλημμελήμασι κατ' ἐκδοχὴν κολάσεως συνιστάμενος φόβος, αἰτίαν ἔχων τῆς οἰκείας γενέσεως τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, ὡς οὐχ ἁγνός, οὐκ ἔσται διαπαντός, τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ διὰ τῆς μετανοίας συναφανιζόμενος, ὁ δὲ ἁγνὸς φόβος, ὁ δίχα τῆς ἐπὶ πλημμελήμασι μνήμης ἀεὶ συνεστώς, οὐκ ἀπογενήσεταί ποτε, διότιπερ οὐσιωδῶς ἐμπέφυκέ πως τῷ θεῷ πρὸς τὴν κτίσιν, ποιούμενος ἔκδηλον αὐτοῦ πᾶσι τὴν φυσικὴν αἰδεσιμότητα τῆς ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν βασιλείαν τε καὶ δύναμιν ὑπεροχῆς—, ὁ τοίνυν μὴ φοβούμενος τὸν θεὸν ὡς κριτήν, ἀλλ' αἰδούμενος αὐτὸν διὰ τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς ἀπείρου δυνάμεως ὑπεροχήν, οὐκ ἔχει δικαίως ὑστέρημα, τέλειος ὑπάρχων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ, μετ' αἰδοῦς καὶ τῆς πρεπούσης σεβασμιότητος ἀγαπῶν τὸν θεόν, καὶ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ κτησάμενος τὸν διαμένοντα φόβον εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτῷ ὑστέρημα τὸ παράπαν οὐδέν. *qu. Thal.* 10 (CCSG 7: 85–87).

69 Ibid.

70 Καὶ ἐπαναπαύσεται, φησίν, ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἑπτὰ πνεύματα· πνεῦμα σοφίας, πνεῦμα συνέσεως, πνεῦμα γνώσεως, πνεῦμα ἐπιστήμης, πνεῦμα βουλῆς, πνεῦμα ἰσχύος, πνεῦμα φόβου θεοῦ. Ἔστι δὲ τὸ μὲν πνεῦμα τοῦ φόβου τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ τῶν κατ' ἐνέργειαν κακῶν ἀποχή· τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα τῆς ἰσχύος

magnificence.[71] Maximus concludes that this holy fear of the Lord will endure into eternity. He bases his conclusion on Psalm 88:8, "Fearsome and great is he to all those who surround him." He interprets those who surround God as the communion of saints, maintaining that those in his presence will possess love mixed (ἐγκεκραμένος) with holy fear.[72]

For Maximus, fear among the divinized allows them to behold properly the divine glory in heaven. Fear is a necessary assistant of Christian love, one that begins in the earthly life and continues to the next. In *Question 64*, he discusses the written law in the Old Testament. He teaches that the law accustoms (ἐθίζω) unruly desires (τάς ἀτάκτους ὁρμὰς) through fear of punishment (φοβῳ τῶν ἐπιτιμιῶν). Fear aroused by the law does not hold someone beneath the pressure of constant threat, nor does fear destroy desire. Fear given by the law provides a disposition that gently (ἠρέμα) directs the will toward the beautiful (περὶ τὸ καλὸν). As a result, Maximus teaches that the fullness of the law is achieved when the natural law receives spiritual desire as a helper.

For Maximus, fear educates desire, orienting it toward the divine. This function of fear extends past death into eternity. He describes this position at the end of *Question 10*, where he asserts that the communion of saints possesses love mixed with fear. He writes: "For love, when it separates itself from fear, tends toward ruin, just like many things corrupt."[73] Hence, even in heaven, fear reminds love of the divine majesty of the throne of God. Without this sense of awe, one can forget the singularity of the object of desire, rendering it banal. In this sense, holy fear keeps love in check, calling to mind its divine beauty and helping to maintain love's intensity. To clarify this point, Maximus describes the beatific vision at the end of *Question 10*: "The ones who stand in front of the Lord are the ones who, because of the erotic boiling of the intellectual desire for divine beauty, are made worthy of the enjoyment face to face."[74] Maximus's

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ἐστὶν ἡ πρὸς ἐνέργειαν καὶ πρᾶξιν τῶν ἐντολῶν πρόθυμος ὁρμὴ πρὸς ἐνέργειαν καὶ πρᾶξιν τῶν ἐντολῶν πρόθυμος ὁρμὴκαὶ κίνησις. *qu. Thal.* 54 (CCSG 7: 461).

71 *qu. Thal.* 10 (CCSG 7: 85).

72 ὁ δὲ τὸν φοβούμενον ὡς κριτὴν διὰ τὴν ἐρρυπωμένην συνείδησιν μὴ εἶναι τέλειον ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ. Κατὰ ταύτην τὴν ἐκδοχὴν τυχὸν καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς περικύκλῳ αὐτοῦ φοβερός ἐστιν ὁ θεός, ὡς ἐγκεκραμένην φόβῳ ποιῶν τὴν τῶν ἀγαπώντων αὐτὸν καὶ περὶ αὐτὸν γενησομένων ἀγάπην. *qu. Thal.* 10 (CCSG 7: 87).

73 Φόβου γὰρ καθ' ἑαυτὴν κεχωρισμένη ἡ ἀγάπη εἰς καταφρόνησιν πέφυκεν ὡς τὰ πολλὰ μεταπίπτειν. Ibid.

74 τοὺς δὲ ἐμπρὸς τοὺς δι' ὑπερβάλλουσαν περὶ τὸ θεῖον κάλλος ἐρωτικὴν τῆς κατὰνοῦν ἐφέσεως ζέσιν ἀξιωθέντας τῆς πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον ἀπολαύσεως. Ibid. (CCSG 7, 87). In his *Commentary on the Our Father*, Maximus writes about the composition of fear mixed with desire to properly form love. "For this reason, admiring the greatness of your condescension, I blended my fear with affection, and from these two, fear and affection, created a

position follows from his prior examination of fear in *Centuries on Charity*. Fear protects against unbridled freedom of love (τὴν τῆς ἀγάπης παρρησίαν) lest it deform into contempt for God (εἰς καταφρόνησιν Θεοῦ ἔλθῃ).[75] Maximus translates this monastic consideration into his eschatological vision. Fear among the saints stokes the fire beneath the boiling, erotic desire of the divinized.[76]

Maximus's position relates to the problem of satiety that Origen introduced and Gregory of Nyssa attempted to correct. A close reader of both Origen and Gregory, Maximus knows this problem well and deals with it directly in the *Ambigua*.[77] To review, Origen considers the original Fall as a "cooling" away from the fiery presence of God.[78] In the return to divine bliss, Origen hypothesizes that any lapse due to satiety would be slow and therefore could be caught and corrected. Gregory, seeing this problem, responds with *epekstasis*, the idea that our innate desire for God is ever expanding to participate in God's infinity. Blowers correctly observes that Gregory's concept of *epekstasis* forms the basis for Maximus's solution to the problem of the potential for the soul's satiety or boredom in the divine life.[79] Yet, Maximus is aware that the idea of ever-expanding desire does not "*ipso-facto* eradicate the possibility of a satiety or future deviation in virtue."[80] For this reason, Maximus proposes the paradoxical "ever-moving repose (στάσις ἀεικίνητος)," both as an teleological appeasement

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single thing, love, made up of modesty and benevolence, in such manner that fear devoid of affection did not become hatred, nor did an affection not joined to a prudent fear become presumption … Realizing that it (that is, fear) confirms divine love more than anything else, the blessed David has said, 'the fear of the Lord is chaste and remains from age to age.' (Ps 19:10) He well knew that this fear is different from the fear which consists of being afraid of punishments for faults of which we are accused, since for one thing this (fear of punishment) disappears completely in the presence of love, as the great evangelist John shows somewhere in his words, 'Love drives out fear.' (1 Jn 4:18) For another thing, the former (fear of the Lord) naturally characterizes the law of true concern; it is through reverence that the saints keep forever completely uncorrupted the law and mode of life of love toward God and toward each other." *or. dom.*, Prologue (CCSG 23, 27; trans. Berthold, 101).

75 Cf. *car.* 1.81.

76 I will discuss Maximus's understanding of erotic love and this image in Chapter 6.

77 *ambig.* 7 (PG 91: 1068D–1101D). See Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*; Blowers, "Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of 'Perpetual Progress'" 151–171. Both of these works consider Maximus's correction of Origenism in light of salient texts from the *Ambigua*. The following attempts to address Maximus's concern of satiety in light of his discourse on the passions in *Ad Thalassium.*

78 *princ.* 2.8.3.

79 Blowers, "The Concept of 'Perpetual Progress,'" 154–155. Blowers observes that Maximus echoes Nyssen's characterization of Moses as the ideal monk, straining always upward toward perfection, using the same key Pauline text, Phil 3:14. See *qu. Thal.* 17 (CCSG 7: 115).

80 Blowers, ibid., 157.

of the desire of the finite human being and as an accommodation of the divinized soul's perpetual enjoyment of the infinite God.[81]

Maximus's position on fear offers another access point to his conversation with this earlier problem. For Maximus, perfected fear functions in the soul of the divinized in two ways. First, it keeps the intensity of a Christian's erotic love for God at its maximum boiling point. In this way, it wards off the problem of hypothetical "cooling" or relapse, as we have seen in Origen. Likewise, Gregory's concept of *epekstasis* is perhaps too optimistic in regards to human desire's ability to maintain its blessed end on its own. Maximus's eternal fear in the soul of the divinized keeps human erotic desire acute and focused on God. In this way, the monastic discipline of vigilance—which Maximus contends is cultivated by having the "fear of God before one's eyes"[82]—is transmuted into the eschatological realm and avoids the problem of satiety and potential relapse after the Fall. Hence, for Maximus, fear keeps salvation secure in the life of the divinized.

9 The Consequences of Maximus's Teaching on Fear for His Christology

Maximus's analysis of the emotional state of fear, drawn from the analysis of various biblical *loci*, is of no small consequence for his later Christology. His interpretation of the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane is aided by his earlier examination of the biblical texts above, which leads him to admit a place for holy fear in the life of the Christian, both on earth, for "those who fear the Lord want for nothing," and in heaven, for "he is fearful for those who surround him."[83] In both his ascetic works and in his later dogmatic and apologetic works, at no point does Maximus consider fear a vicious passion. He simply prioritizes unholy and holy fear and classifies them according to the different levels of Christian perfection. The former is associated with repentance, and the latter is possessed by the divinized, which fuels and focuses desire for the divine in eternal life, thereby directing one's actions and emotional activity here on earth. Maximus teaches that Christ employed "natural fear" in order

81 See *qu. Thal.* 65 (CCSG 22: 285). Blowers, "The Concept of Perpetual Progress," 159–160. On the Neoplatonic background of "ever-moving repose," see Paul C. Plass, "'Moving Rest' in St. Maximus the Confessor," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 35 (1984): 177–190; Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 248–250.

82 *ascet.* 18.

83 Ps 33:10, Ps 88:8.

to totally assume human nature. Maximus's positive appreciation of natural fear comes into play in his later Christological thought in striking ways, as in *Opusculum 3*:

> For this reason, he says, "Father, if it is possible, take this cup from me, except that not my will, but your will be done,"[84] demonstrating at the moment of contraction (ἅμα τῇ συστολῇ) the impulse of the human will in natural conjunction with the divine, according to the interweaving of the physical *logos* mode of the economy.[85]

Here, Maximus talks about the natural repulsion for death in terms of its physicalized sensation of contraction (συστολή), expressed in the same way that the Stoics define the emotion of fear. However, for Maximus, this natural contraction is an articulation of the intricate relationship between the nature of the divine Word and his human nature. Fear determines the natural contours of this relationship.

In *Opusculum 24*, Maximus uses fear more explicitly in his exploration of the Garden of Gethsemane to defend the two wills of Christ:[86]

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84 Mt 26:39; Lk 12:42.

85 Διό φησι· Πάτηρ, εἰ δυνατόν παρελθέτω τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ· πλὴν μὴ τὸ ἐμὸν αλλὰ τὸ σὸν γενέσθω θέλημα· δεικνὺς ἅμα τῇ συστολῇ, τὴν ὁρμὴν τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου θελήματος ἐν τῇ συμφυΐᾳ τοῦ θεϊκοῦ, κατὰ τὴν φυσικοῦ λόγου πρὸς τὸν τῆς οἰκονομίας τρόπον συμπλοκῆν, *Opusc.* 3 (PG 91: 48C).

86 It is not possible here to examine exhaustively Maximus's teaching on emotion for his concept of the will. However, I argue that these Stoic-inspired ascetic arguments play a greater role than has been previously examined. For a basic understanding on Maximus's teaching on the will, see David Bradshaw, "St. Maximus Confessor on the Will," in *Knowing the Purpose of Everything through the Resurrection*, 143–157; Ian McFarland, "'Willing Is Not Choosing': Some Anthropological Implications of Dyothelite Christology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 1 (2007): 3–23. The following parallel to contemporary Augustinian scholarship is helpful. For the philosophical antecedents of the concept of will, see Michael Frede, *A Free Will*. Frede locates the development of the concept of will in the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, and argues that the Stoic view was adopted later by Augustine. Other such re-evaluations of Augustine's thought are Sara C. Byers, *Perception, Sensibility, and Moral Motivation in Augustine*, John M. Rist, *Augustine Deformed*. Rist sees Augustine's concept of will as not just expressing choice but desire, a "loving will." It is only in Anselm that Augustine's position is reduced to a faculty of "choice," rather than an expression of one's desires and personhood, see *Augustine Deformed* 84–100. Similarly, scholarship on Maximus has looked at his understanding of will conditioned by this rarefied concept of will, in part encouraged by Maximus himself. See his taxonomy of Greek terms for his *Letter to Marinus/Opusc. 1* (PG 91: 9A–37A). Still a more thorough understanding of how Stoic views of the will influence Maximus's thought would be helpful. The editor of the posthumous volume *A Free Will* claims that Frede intended to explore

> "Not as I will but as you will."[87] This demonstrates no other thing, but that Christ truly has assumed flesh that feared death (φόβουμένην θάνατον). To fear, shrink from (ἀναδύεσθαι), and be distressed (ἀγωνιᾶν) about death, is a property of the flesh. Now, he leaves the flesh alone and stripped of its proper capacity, so that he might reveal the flesh's weakness, and that the nature of the flesh might be believed. But he does not hide this nature, so that you might learn that he was not a mere man. For if he just demonstrated human qualities (τὰ ἀνθρωπινα επιδείκυτο), this might be believed, just like if he simply performed divine qualities, the Incarnation might not be believed.[88]

Maximus stresses the natural human fear of death as proof of Christ's genuine humanity.[89] Drawing from the Gospel of Matthew, he writes about fear as an essential component of human action and willing. Maximus's comfort with the presence of fear in Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane is a distinct departure

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later Byzantine thought on the will to add to the manuscript, but died before completing this work. Skipping over Maximus, Frede did leave a study of John of Damascus. See Michael Frede, "John of Damascus on Human Action, the Will, and Human Freedom," in *Byzantine Philosophy and Its Ancient Sources*, ed. Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 63–96.

For the most recent scholarship on Maximus's knowledge of Augustine, see Johannes Börjesson, "Augustine on the Will," in *OHMC*, 212–234, who concludes that the only historical proof that Maximus encountered Augustine was vis-à-vis the Lateran Synod of 649, where Augustinian citations are used in patristic florilegia in support of the dyothelite doctrine. Maximus referred to these documents in later debates.

87 Mt 26:39.

88 Οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ θέλω, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς σὺ οὐδὲν ἕτερον δείκνυσιν, αλλ᾽ ἢ ὅτι σάρκα ἀληθῶς περιβέβληται φοβοθμένην θάνατον. Τὸ γὰρ φοβεῖσθαι θάνατον καὶ ἀναδύεσθαι καὶ ἀγωνιᾶν, ἐκείνης ἐστί. Νῦν μὲν οὖν ἐρήμην αὐτὴν ἀφίησι καὶ γυμνῆν τῆς οἰκείας ἐνεργείας, ἵνα αὐτῆς δείξιας τὴν ἀσθένειαν, πιστώσηται αὐτῆς καὶ τὴν φύσιν. Νῦν δὲ αὐτὴν οὐκ ἀποκρύπτει, ἵνα μάθῃς ὅτι οὐ φιλὸς ἄνθρωπος ἦν. Ὥσπερ γὰρ εἰ διὰ πάντων τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἐπεδείκνυτο, τοῦτο ἂν ἐνομίσθη· Οὕτως εἰ διὰ παντὸς τὰ τῆς θεότητος ἐπετέλει ἐπιστήθη ἂν ὁ τῆς οἰκονομίας λόγος. *opusc.* 24 (PG 91: 268B–C).

89 Correct hermeneutics regarding the Garden of Gethsemane was at the heart of Maximus's argument against monothelitism. The basic text that discusses this pericope and its relationship to Maximus's doctrinal debates is François-Marie Léthel, *Théologie de l'agonie du Christ. La liberté humaine du Fils de Dieu et son importance sotériologique mises en lumière par saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979). For emphasis on the exegetical aspects of Maximus's understanding of the Gethsemane event, see the important work of Marcel Doucet, "La volonté humaine du Christ, spécialement en son agonie: Maxime le Confesseur, interprète de l'Ecriture," *Science et esprit* 37 (1985): 123–59. For a more general look at the state of scholarship in light of close readings of Maximus's texts, see Paul M. Blowers, "The Passion of Jesus Christ in Maximus the Confessor: A Reconsideration," in *Studia Patristica* 37, ed. M. F. Wiles and E. J. Yarnold (Louvain: Peeters, 2001), 361–377.

from earlier Christian writers. For example, Origen prefers to speak of Christ's grief in the garden as "the initial stirrings of grief," but maintains that Jesus does not cede to the vicious emotion itself.[90] Origen's description uses the more Stoic concept of *propassiones*, or physicalized amoral movements, to explore Christ's inner life in a way that defends his divinity against passionate imperfection. Maximus, however, is more comfortable with fear, both because of the need to defend Christ's humanity and because of a serious re-evaluation of human fear based on his biblical exegesis as seen above. If fear has a genuine place in the human psyche, both in temporal and eternal life, then fear has a place in Christ's perfected human nature.[91]

More than just doctrinal proof for Christ's humanity, fear also functions more broadly in Maximus's soteriology. Returning to *Question 21*, Maximus explains that the fear of death is precisely the bondage that keeps man linked to pleasure. Christ confronts the fear of death directly in two moments: in the desert and on the Cross. In the first experience, Christ confronts attraction to pleasure through his self-denial in his desert fast. In the second, he confronts man's fear of death through his Passion.

> Therefore according to the first experience, having despoiled "the principalities and powers"[92] that threw themselves at him, having distanced them from our nature, and having healed passibility with respect to pleasure, and "having annulled the bond"[93] of Adam's willing assent to the passions of pleasure, by which man, possessing his own corrupt will inclined toward pleasure, and being silent while professing his bondage by his works, cannot be liberated from the relationship to pleasure because of the fear of death.[94]

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90 *Comm. in Matt.* 92. The Matthean account does not speak explicitly about Christ's fear, but rather that "he began to be grieved and troubled [λυπεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν]" (Mt 26:37). However, the sense of the passage is clear; the source of Jesus's disturbance is the anticipation of his impending suffering and death, hence why Maximus is able to discuss Christ's fear.

91 Doucet argues that these natural repulsions are still under the deliberate control of Christ, distinct from the human experience of their involuntary surgings. "La volonté humaine du Christ," 139.

92 Col 2:15.

93 Col 2:14.

94 Οὕτω μὲν οὖν κατὰ τὴν πρώτην πεῖραν προσβαλούσας τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας ἐξεδύσατο, πόρρω ποιήσας τῆς φύσεως, καὶ τὸ καθ' ἡδονὴν παθητὸν ἰασάμενος, καὶ τὸ χειρόγραφον ἐν ἑαυτῷ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ τῆς τῶν καθ' ἡδονὴν παθῶν γνωμικῆς συγκαταθέσεως ἀπαλείψας· δι' οὗ τὴν γνώμην ὁ ἄνθρωπος ῥέπουσαν ἔχων πρὸς ἡδονὴν τὴν πονηρὰν καθ' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ σιγῶν διὰ τῶν ἔργων

Christ, however, experiences the fear of death and subverts it on the Cross. He experiences fear of death but "remains unassailable to struggles (μείνας τοῖς πόνοις ἀνάλωτος)."[95] He does this because man, who "is tyrannized at all times by fear of death against his will, holds on to the bondage of pleasure in order to live."[96] Christ's willful experience of the human fear of death, not shrinking from it, gives human nature the ability to triumph over it. Maximus recognizes that passibility is properly human. Insofar as passibility exists in this world, it is necessarily mixed with evil. Hence, for Maximus, the battle for humanity happens on the level of passibility to usurp the evil power that rules our nature, untangle it from the ties to evil, and reorient all of it to the divine.[97] Christ's willing embrace of all that humanity naturally fears shows that the perfection of human emotion as *apatheia* requires that we not drain this state of perfection of emotional content, but rather consider the complexity of activity that humanity enjoys as *apathes*, fear included. Our personal salvation consists in taking on this battle of human passibility won by Christ and making it our own.

ἀνεκήρυττε δεσποτείαν, τῷ τοῦ θανάτου φόβῳ τῆς καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐνοχῆς οὐκ ἐλευθερούμενος. *qu. Thal.* 21 (CCSG 7: 129–131).

95 Ibid. (CCSG 7: 131).

96 ὁ ἄνθρωπος διαπαντὸς φόβῳ θανάτου καὶ παρὰ γνώμην τυραννούμενος διὰ τὸ ζῆν τῆς καθ' ἡδονὴν ἀντείχετο δουλεία. Ibid.

97 Ibid. (CCSG 7: 133).

CHAPTER 4

A Grief Observed from the Horizon of Eternity

Abstract

This chapter examines Maximus's teaching on grief. I show how the Christians revised this Stoic concept in order to accommodate Christian categories. Stoics account for a certain form of transformative remorse for those making moral progress. In the life of the Sage, this emotion disappears. In contrast, Christian life requires continual repentance. Furthermore, a derivative form of grief, mercy, is central to the moral imperatives on the Gospel. After demonstrating how early Christians critically negotiated with this emotion, according to the data of Revelation, I outline Maximus's teaching on grief. Maximus's point of departure is the Pauline notion of "godly grief," which is to be experienced by Christians on the way to perfection. I then distinguish Maximus's account of positive grief from its sinful form of grief over attachments to pleasure. Maximus then explores the transmutation of the divinized form of grief shared by the saints, who participate in God's salutary desire to redeem humanity.

In monastic life, where repentance is meant to be continual and compunction is desirable, prohibitions against grief in Scripture require an adequate account as to what kind of grief is compatible with Christian living. Maximus takes advantage of scriptural difficulties to resolve these tensions, as well as to present new possibilities about how these emotions function in the life of the Christian. He does so in dialogue with the tradition that comes before him. Early Christians demonstrate differing attitudes toward the passion of grief and its derivatives, particularly because of the Stoics, who consider grief and its derivative passion, mercy, morally weak. Furthermore, the Stoic account has no corresponding positive emotion for grief as they do for the other cardinal passions. By contrast, Christians consider mercy a virtue, as it is at the heart of the gospel. Rather than a bald acceptance of the Stoic position, Christians struggled to make sense of the biblical injunction and the seeming human necessity to grieve and express sorrow in certain contexts. In general, Christians appreciate the emotion of grief insofar as it facilitates conversion. As a consequence, positive forms of grief, particularly mercy, play a larger role in the Christian life.

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1 Stoic Grief and the Value of Temporary Remorse

Grief (λύπη/*aegritudo*) does not have a corresponding good emotion (εὐπάθεια/*constantia*) in the Stoic framework, for the Sage is never shaken by the presence of evil.[1] Furthermore, in the Stoic taxonomy of grief, mercy is consistently included as a derivative form of this cardinal passion.[2] Thus, the Stoic position is at odds with basic Christian teachings on repentance, love of neighbor, and respect for the person made in the image and likeness of God.[3] However, the Stoics do acknowledge a type of grief—remorse (μεταμέλεια)—as a common occurrence among the non-wise: "But the inferior person, being without experience of the right use of things, does everything badly, acting in accordance with the disposition he has, and is also much disposed to change his mind on every occasion filled with remorse."[4] Remorse can also quicken the desire of the non-wise for change. However, the Stoics do not consider remorse a

1 Representative of this view, Cicero writes: "For the present evil the wise person has no affective response (*adfectio*), but the foolish person responds with distress (*aegritudo*). For those who do not obey reason lower and contract their minds in circumstances which they believe to be evil. Hence the first definition for distress is this: 'a contraction of mind contrary to reason.' Thus there are four emotions, but three consistencies (*constantia*), since there is no consistency which corresponds to distress." Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.14 (trans. Graver, 44). Graver argues that Cicero's explanation demonstrates his Stoic commitments, since he departs from the rhetorical tradition that would hold some species of pity as a good. See ead., *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations Books 3 and 4* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 139–148; for a discussion on the same texts, see also, Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action*, 173–75.

2 For the different species of grief, see Stobaeus, 2.90.19–91.9, *LS* 65E. One of the reasons Stoics consider mercy a negative passion is that it could too easily be confused with partiality. In this way, mercy could violate the virtue of equity and thus treat similar crimes dissimilarly or treat people better than they deserve. See John M. Rist, "The Stoic Concept of Detachment," in *The Stoics*, ed. John M. Rist (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 259–272, esp. 266ff.

3 Marcia Colish has argued that Stoic equality should be construed in a more positive sense, more amenable to the Christian tradition. "In the first place, it is inconceivable for the Stoics that there could be any conflict between the good of the individual, the good of the group, and all the good of the universe, for the same *logos* permeates and rules them all. From this premise the Stoics work out a number of distinctive ideas in the field of social and political theory. The *logos* of each man is the *logos* of every man. In their common possession of reason, a fragment of the divine *logos*, all men by nature are equal." *The Stoic Tradition*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 36–37. Following Colish, Nonna Verna Harrison brings Stoic equality in conversation with gender equality in the Greek Fathers. See "Greek Patristic Perspectives on the Origins of Social Injustice," in *Suffering and Evil in Early Christian Thought*, ed. Nonna Verna Harrison and David G. Hunter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 81–96.

4 Stobaeus 2.7.11i, (trans. Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 195). For discussion of remorse in the context of Stoic teaching on emotion, see Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 191–211.

virtuous attitude. They simply acknowledge it happens on the human's way toward virtue as mere temporary inflammation, not to be treated in the moment of its occurrence.[5] For this reason, they also hold that remorse for past deeds is not present in the Sage, as it would signify a defect in virtue.[6] For the Stoics, remorse is at best a temporary experience that urges moral change. While the presence of remorse may be a sign of moral progress, nevertheless it disappears in the life of the perfect.[7]

2 Clement of Alexandria and Mercy as Beneficence

Clement departs from the Stoics to embrace a specific form of grief—mercy—as part of the Christian life. He regards it as an aspect proper to the perfected Christian. He understands grief positively, considering it the basis of conversion. The fruit of conversion is the appropriate love of neighbor:

> Despising, therefore, the possessions which God apportions to you in your magnificence, comply with what is spoken by me; haste to the ascent of the Spirit, being not only justified by abstinence from what is evil, but in addition also perfected, by Christ-like beneficence (τῇ κυριακῇ εὐποιίᾳ). In this instance He convicted the man, who boasted that he had fulfilled the injunctions of the law, of not loving his neighbor; and it is by beneficence that the love which, according to the gnostic ascending scale, is Lord of the Sabbath, proclaims itself.[8]

5 The classic test case in antiquity was Alcibiades, who wept in the lap of Socrates, after being criticized for his former foolishness, *Symp*. 215E–216c; *Alcib.* 118b–c, 127d. For Augustine's consideration of this passage as an example of Pauline "godly grief," see *De civ. Dei*, 14.8. On the concept of inflammation in Stoic moral therapy, see Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions*, 189–192; ead., *Stoicism and Emotion*, 199–200.

6 Graver sees a resemblance between the Stoic view and Aristotle's: "The good person is without remorse." *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.4. *Stoicism and Emotion*, 253 n9 and n11.

7 Stoic passions arise from false beliefs about integral goods and evils. While it may be true that the moral agent's past foolishness is an appropriate response, ultimately these passionate bites fall away in the wise. "New feelings reflect new facts: that what was inadequate, incomplete, and thus, for Stoics, evil has been replaced by goods in possession." Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion*, 211.

8 *str.* 4.6.29 (SC 463: 104; trans. ANF 2, 414).

For Clement, the perfected Christian is expected to be charitable,[9] which he explains in terms of "beneficence," a certain fiscal goodwill shown to strangers and the downcast,[10] which trumps the hard justice of the world.

Clement also discusses mercy in terms of forgiveness (συγγνώμη) and distinguishes it under two aspects: divine and human. He offers the example of Cain and Enoch: "Does not God introduce the repentance of Enoch not long after the forgiveness of Cain? For this reason, forgiveness, by nature engenders repentance (συγγνώμη μετάνοιαν πέφυκε γεννᾶν)."[11] However, Clement suggests that the way God quickens repentance in this situation might be through reproach, purifying the person with some form of temporal punishment.[12] Clement implores the gnostic, or perfected Christian, both to pray for and to practice beneficence (εὐποιία) to those who are under trial. Through intercession and charity, the Christian becomes an "instrument of God's goodness (ὄργανον γενόμενος τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἀγαθότητος)."[13] In *Shall the Rich Be Saved?*, Clement offers a specific example of human participation in God's mercy. Clement recounts how the apostle John once secured a catechumen and left him to the care of the local bishop. After his baptism, the new Christian lapsed and fell in with a band of robbers. John reached out to bring the young man back into the Christian fold. Clement writes that this lapsed Christian was "baptized for the second time by tears" and credits John with facilitating the repentance of this fallen youth.[14]

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9 *str.* 4.22.139 (SC 463: 288); 7.9.52 (SC 428: 174–176).

10 Ibid., 258. Note the use of the word "beneficence" (εὐποιίᾳ) and not "philanthropy." Beginning with Clement and specifically in Origen, *philanthropia* is associated with the act of God becoming flesh in the Incarnation. More on this in the following chapter. One wonders if the use of the word "beneficence" instead of mercy is an example of Stoic influence and, therefore, Clement does not want to commit to a more full-blooded concept of mercy.

11 *str.* 2.15.3.

12 "It leads us to the endless and perfect end, teaching us beforehand the future life that we shall lead, according to God, and with gods; after we are freed from all punishment and penalty which we undergo, in consequence of our sins, for salutary discipline." *Strom* 7.10.56.

13 *str.* 7.13.82 (SC 428: 250–252). On the role of intercessory prayer in Clement, see Jana Platova, "The Gnostic's Intercessory Prayer according to Clement of Alexandria," in *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis*, 185–196.

14 *q.d.s.* 42, 15 (SC 357: 218; 220). For an examination of the human mirroring of divine mercy, see Veronika Cernuskova, "Divine and Human Mercy in the Stromateis," in *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis*, 167–183. On the basis of this passage, Cernuskova argues that Clement has a large definition of what constitutes involuntary sin, making the repentance of this youth possible. On baptism and repentance in Clement, see A. Mehat, "Pénitence second et péché involontaire chez Clément d'Alexandrie," *Vigiliae Christianae* 8, no. 4 (1954): 225–233. For Clement, an essential element of Christian forgiveness is the

We see in Clement two inchoate realities about grief and mercy that have slightly modified the classic Stoic position. First, the agony associated with repentance is a helpful tool in the process of conversion; it is not merely tolerated as a temporary by-product associated with moral progress, but encouraged. Second, the perfected Christian, who enjoys the state of *apatheia*, is urged to perform works of mercy, serving both the material needs of their neighbor, as well as the spiritual needs in terms of intercession and forgiveness. Both these merciful activities participate in Clement's concept of God-likeness, our *apatheia* in imitation of God's *apatheia*.

3 Gregory of Nyssa and the Complexity of Reasonable Grief

Gregory of Nyssa's teaching on grief recognizes the human need for mourning. His position is mediated through the literary voice of his sister, Macrina, both in his biography, *Life of Macrina*,[15] and in his Platonic-inspired dialogue, *On the Soul and Resurrection*. In his *Life of Macrina*, Gregory develops a foil between Macrina's grief-free reaction to their brother's death and the young virgins' explosion into grief at Macrina's own eventual passing. Gregory describes how Macrina assists her mother's grieving in the following way:

> At this point, the great Macrina's excellence was evident. By setting reason against passion, she kept herself in hand, and becoming a bulwark of her mother's weakness, she lifted her out of the abyss of grief, and, by her own firmness and unyielding spirit, she trained her mother's soul to be courageous … Macrina's life, always exalted by virtue, did not give the mother an opportunity to grieve for the one who was absent and caused her to rejoice rather than in the good that was present.[16]

"non-remembrance of wrongs (ἀμνησίκακος)" as an ideal Christian, following Paul's admonition in 1 Cor 6. See Judith L. Kovac, "Paul as Apostle of Apatheia," in *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis*, 199–216, esp. 203ff.

15 It is beyond the scope of this book to discuss the literary function of Macrina's voice in Gregory's theology, which has received much scholarly attention elsewhere. See Elizabeth Clark, "Holy Women, Holy Words: Early Christian Women, Social History and the 'Linguistic Turn'," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 3 (1998), 413–430; Derek Krueger, "Writing and the Liturgy of Memory in Gregory of Nyssa's Life of Macrina," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 8, no. 4 (2000): 483–510. J. Warren Smith, "A Just and Reasonable Grief: The Death and Function of a Holy Woman in Gregory of Nyssa's Life of Macrina," in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 12, no. 1 (2004): 57–84.

16 *v. Mac.* (SC 178: 158–160; trans. Callahan, 169–170).

In contrast, upon Macrina's death, the virgins who were under the care of the newly departed abbess are grief-stricken, and, for a time repress it:

> Until now, they had controlled themselves and kept in check the grief in their souls and they had choked down the impulse to cry out for fear of her, as if they were afraid of the reproach of their voice already silent; lest, contrary to her order, a sound should break forth from them and their leader be troubled by it.[17]

However, they eventually cede to grief, and Gregory follows suit considering it to be "just and reasonable."[18]

In *On the Soul and Resurrection*, this dramatized tension between Macrina's idealized moral restraint in the face of death and Gregory's intuitive notion about "just and reasonable" grief is explored in a more philosophical manner. The dialogue opens with Gregory expressing his grief to Macrina over the recent passing of their brother, Basil. Macrina rebukes him, citing Paul: "It is not right to grieve for those who are asleep, since we are told that sorrow belongs only to those who have no hope."[19] Gregory enters into a discussion with Macrina about the reasons why it is proper to grieve death. Macrina tells Gregory his grief is founded on a false belief, namely, "that the soul does not last forever, but leaves with the dissolution of the body."[20] Against this view, Macrina proposes that the Christian virtue of hope corrects the mistaken belief about death, urging the soul toward the divine and leaving grief behind.[21] However, Macrina and Gregory's contrasting perspectives are at worst a muddle and at best a compromise. Gregory sees something natural in the human emotion of grief in certain situations.[22] Independent of his conversation with Macrina, we see

17 Ibid. (SC 178: 228–230; trans. Callahan 182).

18 Ibid.

19 *anim. et res.* (GNO 3.3: 1–2; trans. Callahan, 198); cf. 1 Thess. 4:13.

20 Ibid. (GNO 3.3: 3; trans. Callahan, 200).

21 Ibid. (GNO 3.3: 67; trans. Callahan 238). Macrina's description of grief as an errant judgment about death sounds Stoic in its formulation, though the sources of Gregory's moral psychology are a subject of debate. Williams in "Macrina's Deathbed Revisited," sees a patchwork of Stoicism and Platonism; J. W. Smith follows suit, see *Passion and Paradise*, 95ff. Michel Barnes makes the claim for Aristotelian elements. See id., "The Polemical Context and Content of Gregory of Nyssa's Moral Psychology," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 4 (1994): 1–24.

22 J. Warren Smith argues that Nyssa resolves the problem of grief through Macrina's insistence on Christian hope and through the "adherence to the claims of orthodoxy." See *Passion and Paradise*, 103. One wonders if this rationalizing approach is enough to change Gregory's intuitive assumption about the appropriateness of some form of grief. Barnes

in his *Homilies on the Beatitudes* that Gregory still struggles to understand the problem of grief. Reflecting on the passage, "Blessed are they who mourn," he resists using the Pauline interpretation of "godly grief" (to which we will return later in Evagrius and Maximus) to make sense of the phrase as the mourning intrinsic to repentance. He sees mourning as a Christian's temporary status on Earth, when one realizes the poverty of this terrestrial life in relation to one's true good. For this reason, he avoids considering the attitude of grief itself a blessed state: "Therefore I would say that the word does not call blessed the sorrow itself, but rather the realization of the good that produces this state of sorrow, which is due to the fact that the object of the desire is absent from our life."[23] While Gregory depicts Macrina as the summit of Christian virtue, his reticence to concede fully to Macrina's ideal of the elimination of grief regarding death shows that Gregory recognizes a problem with Macrina's account, but he does not know how to fix it. His inability to commit to sorrow as a genuine good in the Beatitudes only confirms this fact. A highly speculative thinker, Gregory might be content to leave the problem unresolved.

4 Evagrius and the Correct Observance of Compunction

Evagrius, Maximus's ascetic forebear, develops a more sophisticated understanding of grief in his monastic writings.[24] He lists grief (λύπη) among the eight cardinal vicious thoughts or λογισμοί.[25] However, he leaves ample space for positive forms of grief, such as compunction (πένθος or κατανύξις).[26] For Evagrius, compunction is essential to conversion, and he extols his monks to ask for this gift: "First pray for tears, in order that through compunction, you

suggests that Gregory's teachings on moral psychology change frequently between dogmatic and anthropological contexts. See "Gregory of Nyssa's Moral Psychology."

23 *beat.* 3 (GNO 2.2: 109; trans. Graef, 111).

24 For Evagrius and Maximus in comparison regarding vice and virtue, see Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator*, 248–258.

25 *Praktikos* 6 (SC 171: 504–506).

26 On compunction in Evagrius, see Jeremy Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection: Studies on Spiritual Progress in Evagrius Ponticus*, 51–65. The classic presentation of compunction in the Eastern Christian tradition is Irénée Hausherr, *Penthos: La doctrine de compunction dans l'orient chrétien* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1944). Hausherr's work deals more with a thematic study of an idea than its historical development. For a recent examination of the development of this theme, see Hannah Hunt, *Joy-Bearing Grief: Tears of Contrition in the Writings of the Early Syrian and Byzantine Fathers* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

might calm the wildness in your soul and acquire the forgiveness of the Lord."[27] Yet, he is immediately careful to warn that the gift of tears not be a source of pride, or, worse, that they forget the reason for their tears.[28] Ultimately, tears and mourning form not only the means of the monk's salvation, but the goal for the monk's life here on earth. Evagrius offers a characteristically succinct teaching in this regard, commenting on a passage in Ecclesiastes: "It is better to go to a house of mourning, than to go to a house of drink, since such is the end of every man, and the living will give good to his heart."[29] In response to this verse, Evagrius writes:

> The end of man is beatitude. And if the Lord in the gospels calls mourning blessed in the place where he says "blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be consoled," then rightly does Solomon say here that the end of man is mourning, because he fills with spiritual goods those who live in mourning.[30]

He relates this passage of Ecclesiastes immediately with the Beatitudes. In so doing, he considers mourning as the means to obtain blessedness. He agrees with Nyssa's interpretive strategy to distinguish blessedness and mourning. Mourning is not blessed in itself, but gives way to its proper end: blessedness in God. However, Evagrius is more comfortable than Gregory in considering mourning as beneficial in itself. Evagrius also teaches that mercy and compassion (συμπαθεία) are the fruits of corrective grief: "The soul is little by little pierced by compunction and comes to compassion when the blindness provoked by the demon dissipates."[31] He also discusses compassion as a divine

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27 Πρότερον περὶ λήψεως δακρύων προσεύχου, ἵνα διὰ τοῦ πένθους μαλάξῃς τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ σου ἀγριότητα, καὶ ἐξαγορεύσας κατὰ σοῦ τὴν ἀνομίαν σου τῷ Κυρίῳ, παρ' αὐτοῦ ἀφέσεως τεύξῃ. *De oratione* 5 (SC 589: 222).

28 Κέχρησον τοῖς δάκρυσι πρὸς παντὸς αἰτήματος κατόρθωσιν· λίαν γὰρ χαίρει σου ὁ Δεσπότης ἐν δάκρυσι προσευχὴν δεχόμενος. Ἐὰν πηγὰς δακρύων ἐκχέῃς ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ σου, μηδαμῶς ἐπαίρου ἐν σεαυτῷ, ὡς ὑπὲρ τοὺς πολλοὺς ὤν· βοήθειαν γὰρ προσείληφεν ἡ προσευχή σου, ἵνα δυνηθῇς προθύμως ἐξαγορεύειν σου τὰς ἁμαρτίας, καὶ ἐξευμενίσασθαι τὸν Δεσπότην διὰ τῶν δακρύων. *De oratione*, 7–8 (SC 589: 224–226) See Driscoll, *Steps to Spiritual Perfection*, 54–56.

29 Eccl 7:2.

30 Τέλος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἡ μακαριότης ἐστίν. Εἰ δὲ μακαρίζει τὸ πένθος ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις ὁ κύριος· μακάριοι γάρ, φησίν, οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται, καλῶς τὸ πένθος ὁ Σολομὼν τέλος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου φησίν, ὅπερ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ ζῶντας πληροῖ τῶν πνευματικῶν ἀγαθῶν *Sc. in Eccl.* (SC: 397: 156, trans. Driscoll, 63).

31 τῆς ψυχῆς κατὰ μικρὸν κατανυσσομένης καὶ εἰς συμπάθειαν ἐρχομένης, διαλυομένου τοῦ ἐκ τοῦ δαιμονίου συνισταμένου πωρώματος, *On Thoughts* 11 (SC 438: 190). On this relationship between compunction and compassion and its biblical underpinnings in Evagrius, see Corrigan—Glazov, "Compunction and Compassion," 68–77.

attribute.[32] Evagrius writes amply about both the divine and human aspects of grief and its corollaries, mercy and compassion, but also maintains a clear distinction between vicious grief and controlled grief as a virtuous sign of repentance.

Evagrius develops a highly nuanced position of controlled grief as appropriate. Since continual conversion is the mainstay of the monastic life, it plays a strong role in his thought. In this way, he differs from Clement, who sees grief associated with repentance as somewhat momentary. Furthermore, Evagrius closely aligns mercy with repentance, arguing that merciful attitudes toward others is a sign that penance has been adequately performed. While Stoics consider mercy to be a type of grief, Evagrius articulates a distinctively different view: mercy and compassion (συμπαθεία) are the offspring of corrective grief.

Standing before Clement's limited acceptance of temporary mourning for one's sinfulness and the Christian imperative to practice mercy, as well as Gregory's impulse that part of our human constitution needs to mourn, Maximus faces into this problem of what kind of grief is acceptable in the human soul. He is aided in his exploration of grief by the monastic perspective in Evagrius. An attenuated form of grief—repentance—is threaded through the Christian life. However, Maximus takes Gregory's impulse about the naturalness of grief, and explores how grief in its redeemed form functions in the lives of the saints.

5 The Art of "Suffering Well" and "Godly Grief" in Maximus's Ascetic Theology

Beginning with his earlier ascetic work, *Centuries on Charity*, Maximus follows Evagrius naming grief a vice and one of the thoughts that assails a monk: "In time of temptations, do not leave your monastery; but nobly bear the waves of thoughts, especially those of grief and acedia (τῆς λύπης καὶ τῆς ἀκηδίας). Thus providentially tested by afflictions you will have firm hope in God. But should you leave, you will be found discredited, cowardly, and unstable."[33] However, Maximus's admonition is not to extirpate grief, but to endure it. *Letter 9* is also

32 *De oratione* 62, 69 (SC 589: 274; 282).

33 Ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῶν πειρασμῶν μὴ καταλίπῃς τὸ μοναστήριόν σου, ἀλλὰ φέρε γενναίως τὰ κύματα τῶν λογισμῶν καὶ μάλιστα τῶν τῆς λύπης καὶ τῆς ἀκηδίας. Οὕτω γὰρ οἰκονομικῶς διὰ τῶν θλίψεων δοκιμασθείς, ἕξεις βεβαίαν τὴν εἰς Θεὸν ἐλπίδα. Ἐὰν δὲ καταλιμπάνῃς, ἀδόκιμος καὶ ἄνανδρος καὶ ἄστατος εὑρεθήσῃ. *car.* 1.52 (ed. Gastaldo, 68; trans. Sherwood, 143, modified).

a striking example of Maximus's exhortation to bear sorrow. In this letter, he enjoins the addressee, Thalassius, to rejoice in his affliction. He argues that perfection in the spiritual life consists in "suffering well (πάσχειν καλῶς)":

> And regarding the spiritual life (τοῦ δε πνευματικοῦ), if you long to be led by the spirit of God, O blessed one—and in fact you do desire—do not refuse to be wronged nor decline to bear mockery or violence. Put briefly, while suffering evil, do not cease to do good to those who do evil, nor cease in forgiving all wrongdoings, by the grace of God and by virtue, according to these words: 'And if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well' (Mt 5:40) again according to the blessed apostle 'When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure' (1 Cor 4:12) … And you learn to suffer well (πάσχειν καλῶς) at the hands of those who eagerly wish to harm you by looking at Jesus, the founder of our salvation. Instead of good, he patiently endured every terrible thing—the very things which no one can grasp by knowledge and which no one among sinners is able—he did so for the sake of sinners.[34]

Two important aspects of Maximus's thought emerge from this passage. First, endurance is not simply for its own sake like in an athletic contest, but in imitation of the Lord who endured all things for the salvation of humanity. Such is the lot of Christians, as Maximus's use of Paul indicates. Second, to "suffer well" indicates the redemption of human passibility that Christ offers through his life-giving death. *Apatheia* is wrought precisely through our own human experience. This Christocentric view of suffering is what beautifies human passibility.

Maximus specifies another form of positive grief, following St. Paul's teaching to the Corinthians: "The one who loves God does not grieve nor is grieved at something during this present life; but grieves and is grieved only with a salvific grief, the one which Paul and the Corinthians grieved."[35] Maximus's argument is scriptural. Following Paul, Maximus concedes that such an emotion as "salvific grief" is permissible for a Christian. Elsewhere, he contrasts this positive form of the emotion with "worldly grief" (κοσμική λυπὴ): "He that flees all worldly desires places himself above every worldly grief."[36] Maximus

34 (PG 91: 448B–C).

35 Ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν Θεὸν οὐ λυπεῖ οὐδὲ λυπεῖται πρός τινα διὰ πρόσκαιρα· μίαν δὲ λύπην καὶ λυπεῖ καὶ λυπεῖται σωτήριον, ἣν ὁ μακάριος Παῦλος καὶ ἐλυπήθη καὶ ἐλύπησε τοὺς Κορινθίους. Ibid. 1.41 (ed. Gastaldo, 62).

36 Ὁ φεύγων πάσας τὰς κοσμικὰς ἐπιθυμίας, πάσης κοσμικῆς λύπης ἀνώτερον ἑαυτὸν καθίστησιν. *car.* 1.22 (ed. Gastaldo, 56; trans. Sherwood, 139).

contrasts these two forms of grief as he does similarly in the *Introduction* with "ignorance of God" and "salutary ignorance of the world." In both cases, love is the key ingredient in the transformation of ignorance and grief. Maximus advocates that "scorn and contempt" for material things out of "love for God" is proper medicine to alleviate the grief associated with the non-attainment of earthly goods.

In his ascetic teaching on *Centuries on Charity*, Maximus identifies the kind of grief the Christian is to accept in this present life and offers strategies to deal with these emotions as they arise in the human psyche. First, Maximus reminds his audience of the problem of the pursuit of pleasure, which he identifies as humanity's fundamental errant activity. Accepting suffering and bearing the associated grief function as a corrective for sins performed for the sake of pleasure:

> Practically every sin is committed for pleasure; it is taken away by the suffering of hardships and grief, whether this be voluntary or involuntary, through penitence, or some trial disposed by providence. For Scripture says, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But while we are judged we are chastised by the Lord, that we be not condemned with this world."[37]

Elsewhere, Maximus discusses this form of grief as medicinal, calling to mind the fundamental metaphor in *Ad Thalassium*. In the hands of the diligent Christian, in imitation of Christ, the venom of grief can be repurposed to heal wounded human passibility:

> He surely wants to be healed, the one who does not resist the healing drugs; these are the pains and sorrows that diverse circumstances bring on. The man who resists does not know what is going on here, nor what he would gain from it when he leaves this world.[38]

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37 Πᾶσα σχεδὸν ἁμαρτία διὰ ἡδονὴν γίνεται καὶ ἡ ταύτης ἀναίρεσις διὰ κακοπαθείας καὶ λύπης ἢ ἑκουσίου ἢ ἀκουσίου, διὰ μετανοίας ἢ οἰκονομικῆς ἐπιφορᾶς διὰ τῆς προνοίας ἐπαγομένης. Εἰ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκρίνομεν, οὐκ ἂν ἐκρινόμεθα· κρινόμενοι δὲ ὑπὸ Κυρίου παιδευόμεθα, ἵνα μὴ σὺν τῷ κόσμῳ κατακριθῶμεν. *car.* 2.41 (ed. Gastaldo, 112; trans. Sherwood, 161).

38 Οὗτος ἀκριβῶς θέλει σωθῆναι, ὁ τοῖς ἰατρικοῖς φαρμάκοις μὴ ἀνθιστάμενος· αὗται δέ εἰσιν ὀδύναι καὶ λύπαι διὰ ποικίλων ἐπιφορῶν ἐπαγόμεναι. Ὁ δὲ ἀνθιστάμενος οὐκ οἶδε τί ἐνταῦθα πραγματεύεται οὐδὲ τί ἐντεῦθεν ὀνησόμενος ἀπελεύσεται. Ibid. 3.82 (ed. Gastaldo, 182; trans. Sherwood, 188, modified).

When talking about medicinal grief as an aid to progression in the spiritual life, Maximus typically means bearing grievous treatment by one's neighbor. In the following example, Maximus offers advice to deal with someone who once praised us but now reviles us:

> Whom yesterday you praised as noble and lauded as virtuous do not today disparage as bad and wicked, because you changed from love to hate, making the reproof of your brother the excuse of your wicked hate. On the contrary, stay by those same praises, though you still be ruled by grief, you will easily return to saving charity.[39]

Maximus openly admits that throughout this process, grief is not only present but predominates. Yet, in the company of grief, the Christian endures beyond the present circumstance. Again here, bearing grief brings one closer to divine charity.

Thus far, we have seen how Maximus advocates a healthy form of grief as necessary for salvation. This is mostly in terms of accepting present sufferings, or abstaining from worldly cares. In one instance, however, he deals with the sinful grief of others. How are we to deal with those who are envious of us? Envy, a sort of frustrated desire, is a form of grief. Maximus instructs that for these cases, we are to offer sympathy:

> You will allay the grief of the envious man with a great difficulty, since he reckons what he envies in you as his misfortune; it can be allayed in no other way than by your hiding something from him. But if this thing is beneficial to many yet to him a cause of grief, which side will you take? It is then necessary to stay with the benefit of the many and still, as much as you may, not neglect him. Nor will you be carried away by the virulence of the passion (as you are not assisting the passion but the sufferer); but in humility you will esteem him more than yourself; always, everywhere, and in every situation you will prefer him. For your own envy, you will be able to allay it, if you rejoice with the man you envy at what he rejoices, and grieve at what he grieves. Thus you fulfill the saying of the Apostle: "Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep."[40]

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39 Μὴ ὃν ἐπῄνεις χθὲς ὡς καλὸν καὶ ἐνεκωμίαζες ὡς ἐνάρετον, σήμερον ὡς φαῦλον καὶ πονηρὸν κακολογήσῃς, διὰ τὴν σὴν ἐξ ἀγάπης εἰς μῖσος μεταβολὴν τὸν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ ψόγον ἀπολογίαν τοῦ ἔν σοι πονηροῦ μίσους ποιούμενος· ἀλλὰ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐγκωμίοις ἐπίμεινον, κἂν ἔτι ὑπὸ τῆς λύπης κεκράτησαι, καὶ εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν σωτήριον ἀγάπην εὐχερῶς ἐπανέρχῃ. Ibid. 4.27 (ed. Gastaldo, 204; trans. Sherwood, 196, modified).

40 Τοῦ φθονοῦντος τὴν λύπην κόπῳ στήσεις· συμφορὰν γὰρ ἡγεῖται τὸ ἐν σοὶ φθονούμενον καὶ οὐ δυνατὸν ἄλλως στῆσαι, εἰ μή τι κρύψῃς αὐτόν. Εἰ δὲ πολλοὺς μὲν ὠφελεῖ, ἐκεῖνον δὲ λυπεῖ, ποίου

Sharing in the suffering of those who envy us can effect change in the individual struggling with the sin of envy. For this reason, accepting the sufferings that vex us is not just medicinal for our own salvation. Rather, we take on the sufferings of others in an act of compassion in order to assist in their own salvific healing. In a striking way, Maximus's insistence on Christ's injunction to love one's enemies goes beyond satisfying the criterion of the Gospel, but shows what such behavior can do.

Maximus's ascetic teaching on salvific grief in the *Centuries on Charity* has primarily two aims: 1) The renunciation of worldly pleasures and the acceptance of sufferings on this earth. 2) Sharing in the sufferings and grieving of others, including those of our enemies. According to Maximus, there is no sense in which grief can be considered ultimately unhealthy or irrational. Based on the new facts found in salvation, grief is an activating positive force in the Christian life. In this way, he is close to Evagrius, who advocates for a similar form of salvific grief and sympathy for the suffering of our neighbor. These ascetic themes that Maximus briefly introduces in his laconic *Centuries* are explored in greater detail in *Ad Thalassium*. Just as Paul's teaching on grief occasions Maximus to provide an account of what salvific grief is, so too do these scriptural difficulties help him to make sense of the appropriate place of grief in the Christian life.

6 Voluntary and Involuntary Grief in *Ad Thalassium*

Maximus explores the nature of grief in his response to the exhortation to rejoice while suffering in 1 Peter 1:6: "'In this rejoice exceedingly, if we should suffer many trials, it is only for a little while presently.' How can someone who suffers many trials rejoice when he is afflicted?"[41] Maximus describes two types of grief (λύπη), one that afflicts the body and the other that troubles the soul. He defines grief as a disposition deprived of pleasure (διάθεσις ἡδονῶν ἐστερημένη). He describes this deprivation as a type of deficiency (ἔλλειψις). While the

μέρους περιφρονήσεις; Ἀναγκαῖον οὖν τῆς τῶν πολλῶν γενέσθαι ὠφελείας κἀκείνου δὲ κατὰ δύναμιν μὴ ἀμελεῖν μηδὲ τῇ τοῦ πάθους πονηρίᾳ συναπαχθῆναι, ὡς οὐχὶ τῷ πάθει, ἀλλὰ τῷ πάσχοντι ἀμυνόμενον· ἀλλὰ τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ ἡγεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπερέχοντα σεαυτοῦ καὶ ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ καὶ τόπῳ καὶ πράγματι προτιμᾶν αὐτόν. Τὸν δὲ σὸν φθόνον δύνασαι στῆσαι, ἐὰν ἐν οἷς χαίρει ὁ ὑπό σου φθονούμενος συγχαίρῃς καὶ ἐν οἷς λυπεῖται καὶ αὐτὸς συλλυπῇ, πληρῶν τὸ τοῦ Ἀποστόλου, τό· Χαίρειν μετὰ χαιρόντων καὶ κλαίειν μετὰ κλαιόντων. Ibid., 3.91 (ed. Gastaldo, 186–188; trans. Sherwood, 190). Cf. Rom. 12:15.

41 Ἐν ᾧ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὀλίγον ἄρτι εἰ δέον ἐστὶ λυπηθέντας ἡμᾶς ἐν ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς. Πῶς τις λυπούμενος ἐν πειρασμοῖς δύναται ἀγαλλιᾶσθαι ἐν ᾧ λυπεῖται; *qu. Thal.* 58 (CCSG 22: 27).

term "deficiency" recalls Maximus's description of evil in the *Introduction*,[42] Maximus here does not immediately ascribe negative moral value to this emotional state. He instead calls it an emotion (πάθος) that naturally exists as a power in the soul.[43] For Maximus, these emotional states are contingent states of existence, neutral in themselves, that depend on good or bad use.

Grief is a more complex emotional state since it involves the rejection of the attainment of pleasure, an important theme in Maximus's ascetical perspectives in *Ad Thalassium*. To provide an adequate account of grief, he must therefore delineate types of pleasure. He distinguishes between two types of pleasures, one that afflicts the soul and another the body. Under both these forms, pleasure is encountered with the experience of temptation. In order to get at what type of pleasure is desirable and, as a result, what sort of grief is desirable, Maximus teaches that there are two basic types of temptations. *Scholion 2* of *Question 58*, though likely not original to Maximus, explains this distinction in *Ad Thalassium* well:

> He speaks of a double affliction, one that is related to sensibility and is created by the privation of physical pleasures. The other is related to the intellect and is born of the privation of the goods for the soul. And he speaks of two sorts of grief, one voluntary and the other involuntary. The voluntary ones are the fathers of physical pleasure joined to sensibility and give birth to the affliction—for only sin can humble the soul—the involuntary show themselves in opposition to the disposition of the will and they are the fathers of pleasure of the soul and give birth to bodily, sensible pleasure.[44]

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42 *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 29).

43 Ibid. Perhaps Maximus's positive evaluation of suffering consists in calling it a πάθος and not πάθη. Scholars of Maximus have generally held that Maximus makes this verbal distinction of "πάθος" to refer to positive or morally neutral emotions and "πάθη" to describe vicious ones. See Blowers, "The Dialectics and Therapeutics of Desire," 430–431; Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 185–96.

44 Διττὴν τὴν λύπην λέγει, τὴν μὲν περὶ τὴν αἴσθησιν κατὰ στέρησιν τῶν σωματικῶν ἡδονῶν συνισταμένην, τὴν δὲ περὶ νοῦν κατὰ στέρησιν τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀγαθῶν γινομένην. Διττοὺς δὲ λέγει καὶ τοὺς πειρασμούς, τοὺς μὲν ἑκουσίους, τοὺς δὲ ἀκουσίους· καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἑκουσιους τῆς δὲ κατὰ ψυχὴν λύπης εἶναι γεννήτορας μόνη γὰρ πραχθεῖσα ταπεινοῖ τὴν ψυχὴν ἡ ἁμαρτία τοὺς δὲ ἀκουσίους, οἵτινες ἐν τοῖς παρὰ γνώμην δείκνυνται πόνοις, τῆς μὲν κατὰ ψυχὴν ἡδονῆς εἶναι πατέρας, τῆς δὲ κατ᾽ αἴσθησιν σωματικῆς ὀδυνης εἶναι γεννήτορας. *qu. Thal.* 58, *scholion* 2 (CCSG 22: 39). Maximus is unique among Greek patristic writers to have annotated his own text with scholia, considering it necessary "to complete the beauty of the work." Cf. *qu. Thal.* Prologue, 1 (CCSG 7: 12). However, Constas has put forth criteria for evaluating the authenticity of Maximian scholia in *Ad Thalassium*. See Maximos Constas, "Translator's Introduction" in *On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: The Responses to Thalassios*, trans.

It is necessary to clarify Maximus's teaching on grief here. Maximus holds that two types of grief assail the human as a result of temptations. He describes temptations under two categories: voluntary (ἐκούσιος) and involuntary (ἀκούσιος). A voluntary temptation consists in the soul's assent to physical pleasure. The end of every chosen physical pleasure is grief in the soul. Maximus here is consistent with his teaching on pleasure and pain, which he established in the *Introduction*: there is no experience of finite pleasure that does not end in pain in the physical life. He also holds that a voluntary choice (ἐκούσιος προαίρεσις) of physical pleasure results in being deprived of eternal joy.

Involuntary temptations, on the other hand, happen to the body against our free will (παρὰ προαίρεσιν), such are sickness, disease, or personal injury by an enemy. However, despite the involuntary status of these temptations, Maximus recommends that one accept them willingly, since they provide useful grief (τὴν λύπην ὠφέλιμον) of the kind that produces salutary pleasure for the soul (τὴν ἡδονὴν σωτήριον).[45] Thus, he sees a certain type of grief as a useful, instrumental good. Hence, a proper relationship with these two different types of temptation is necessary for progression in the spiritual life.

To describe the attitude of a Christian toward these two types of grief, Maximus has recourse to two key scriptural passages, the Our Father and the Letter of James. In explaining the petition from the Our Father, "and lead us not to temptation," he makes clear that the request is a plea to be delivered from the temptations of physical pleasure, the kind that one willfully chooses and which damages the soul. In contrast, he cites the Letter of James, which seems to exhort the Christian to the opposite: "Rejoice exceedingly, my

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Maximos Constas, Fathers of the Church Series 136 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2018, 52–57). Here the use of the third person indicates a different author. Nevertheless, even the anonymous scholiast can adequately represent Maximus's thought, as Constas himself suggests, see "Introduction," 55–56.

45 Οὕτως οὖν, κατ' ἐμὲ φάναι, δύναται χαίρειν ἄνθρωπος ἐν ᾧ λυπεῖται. Τῇ γὰρ ἀρετῇ κατὰ σάρκα μὲν διὰ τοὺς πόνους λυπούμενος ἐν αὐτῇ χαίρει τῇ ἀρετῇ κατὰ ψυχήν, ὡς παροῦσαν θεώμενος τὴν τῶν μελλόντων εὐπρέπειαν, ὑπὲρ ἧς, κατὰ τὸν μέγαν Δαυίδ, τῇ κατὰ γνώμην ἀπογενέσει τῆς σαρκὸς καθ' ἑκάστην ἀποθνῄσκει τὴν ἡμέραν ὁ κατὰ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἐν πνεύματι γένεσιν ἀεὶ καινιζόμενος, ἅτε δὴ καὶ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἔχων σωτήριον καὶ τὴν λύπην ὠφέλιμον. Λύπην γάρ φαμεν οὐ τὴν παράλογον καὶ τῶν πολλῶν ἐπὶ στερήσει παθῶν ἢ πραγμάτων ὑλικῶν τὴν ψυχὴν βασανίζουσαν, ὡς τὰς ὁρμὰς παρὰ φύσιν ἐφ' ἃ μὴ δεῖ, καὶ τὰς ἀποφυγὰς ἀφ' ὧν μὴ δεῖ, ποιουμένων, ἀλλὰ τὴν λελογισμένην καὶ τοῖς τὰ θεῖα σοφοῖς ἐγκριθεῖσαν καὶ τὸ παρὸν κακὸν ὑποσημαίνουσαν. Παρὸν γὰρ κακόν φασιν εἶναι τὴν λύπην, συνισταμένην μὲν κατὰ ψυχήν, ὅταν ἡ κατ' αἴσθησιν ἡδονὴ τῆς λογικῆς κρατῇ διακρίσεως, ὑφισταμένην δὲ κατ' αἴσθησιν, ὅταν τῆς ψυχῆς κατ' ἀρετὴν ἀκωλύτως ὁ δρόμος ἀνύηται, τοσοῦτον ἐπάγων τῇ αἰσθήσει τοὺς πόνους, ὅσον ἡδονὴν ἐμποιεῖ καὶ χαρὰν τῇ ψυχῇ τῷ θεῷ προσαγομένῃ διὰ τῆς συγγενοῦς κατ' ἀρετήν τε καὶ γνῶσιν ἐλλάμψεως. *qu. Thal.* 58 (CCSG 22: 37).

brothers, whenever you experience many trials."[46] The two passages seem contradictory—one asks deliverance from and the other exhorts the willful embrace of temptations—yet Maximus puts the inner tension of Scripture at the service of his ascetical teaching. For Maximus, both Scripture passages are to be accepted. The Christian life requires a two-step move, a movement away from voluntary affliction of the soul and a movement toward involuntary affliction of the body. The coordination of these two movements produces perfection. Hence, in the Our Father, the petition is aimed at distancing oneself from the temptations that we willfully choose, while the Letter of James instructs the Christian to rejoice in the sufferings that come upon us involuntarily. Maximus uses these two passages to sketch the guidelines for Christian praxis concerning grief and suffering.[47]

Both the initial passage of 1 Peter and the Letter of James exhort the Christian to rejoice while suffering. This brings us to Thalassius's initial question about whether such an emotional state is possible. Maximus responds affirmatively. First, he recalls the premise stated in the *Introduction* that there

46 James 1:2.

47 Καὶ δηλοῦσι σαφῶς, ἐκεῖ μὲν ἐπάγων ὁ κύριος· ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ, ἐνταῦθα δὲ ὁ μέγας Ἰάκωβος· γινώσκοντες ὅτι τὸ δοκίμιον ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως κατεργάζεται ὑπομονήν· ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ ἔργον τέλειον ἐχέτω, ἵνα ἦτε τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι, ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι. Τέλειός ἐστιν ὁ τοῖς ἑκουσίοις δι' ἐγκρατείας μαχόμενος καὶ τοῖς ἀκουσίοις δι' ὑπομονῆς ἐγκαρτερῶν πειρασμοῖς, καὶ ὁλόκληρός ἐστιν ὁ καὶ τὴν πρᾶξιν μετὰ γνώσεως καὶ τὴν θεωρίαν οὐκ ἄπρακτον διανύων. *qu. Thal.* 58 (CCSG 22: 29–31). Maximus echoes this teaching in his *Commentary on the Our Father*: "For according to Scripture there are two kinds of temptation, one pleasurable and the other painful, the first being intentional and the other unintentional. The former begets sin and the Lord's teaching instructs us to pray not to enter into this when he tells us, 'and lead us not into temptation,' and 'watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation.' The latter, a penalty for sin, chastises the disposition of loving sin by involuntary recurrences of troubles. If we endure them and especially if we are not attached to them by the nails of wickedness, we shall hear the great Apostle James who clearly proclaims, 'count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for the testing endured by your faith produces constancy, constancy produces fidelity, and fidelity accompanies a perfect work.' The Evil One mischievously uses both kinds of temptations, voluntary and involuntary, the first by sowing and greatly provoking the soul with bodily pleasures and scheming first to take away the desire of divine love. Then he cunningly works on the other type, hoping to corrupt the nature by pain so as to constrain the soul, struck down by the weakness of sufferings to set in motion the attitudes of hatred of the Creator." *or. dom.* 6 (CCSG 23: 72; trans. Berthold, 118–119). Nicholas Madden sees this section of the *Commentary on the Our Father*, as a recapitulation of the entire work. On style, structure, and its meaning for the work, see id., "Commentary on the Pater Noster: An Example of Structural Methodology of Maximus the Confessor," in *Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium*, 147–155.

is no experience of pleasure on Earth that does not have corresponding pain. The same is true with grief. If physical pleasure produces spiritual grief to the soul, then the converse is true: "Pleasure of the soul produces necessarily affliction (λύπη) of sensibility, that is pain (πόνος)."[48] The Christian is aided in his physical experience of pain by the hope of resurrection. Having this hope, the Christian's soul is filled with "unspeakable joy."[49] Hence, the experience of physical affliction is muted by the memory of the experience of this aspect of divine revelation.

At the end of Maximus's response, he contrasts useful grief with "irrational" grief:

> We do not speak here about the irrational grief (τὴν λύπην … τὴν παραλόγον) of the many depraved passions or in works of the flesh which torture the soul, for they are impulses against nature towards which we must not move and they are escapes from which we must not exit. Rather, we speak of the reasonable, discerned grief of the wise, which signifies the present evil with respect to the divine reality.[50]

This conception of grief sounds thoroughly Stoic in its formulation: useful grief is an appropriate response before a rightly discerned present evil. However, the corresponding positive emotion for the Stoics is εὐλαβεία. That Maximus uses the word "grief" signifies two things. First, he accepts as a postulate the redemptive value of suffering for Christians. Second, he recognizes that bodily affliction in the Christian is also a correlate of Christian joy. His reasoning depends on the exegesis of the biblical passages covered in *Question 58*. Recognizing the apparent contradiction to rejoice in one's sufferings mentioned by 1 Peter, Maximus goes about the work of explaining its meaning.

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48 Οὐκοῦν, ὡς ἔφην, ἐπειδὴ τὴν μὲν τῆς ψυχῆς λύπην, ἤγουν τὸν πόνον—ταὐτὸν γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀμφότερα—, ἡ κατ' αἴσθησιν ἡδονὴ συνίστησιν, τὴν δὲ τῆς αἰσθήσεως λύπην, ἤγουν τὸν πόνον, ἡ κατὰ ψυχὴν ποιεῖν ἡδονὴ πέφυκεν. *qu. Thal.* 58 (CCSG 22: 35).

49 ἐφιέμενος κατὰ μὲν τὴν ψυχὴν ἀγαλλίασιν ἔχει καὶ χαρὰν ἀνεκλάλητον. Ibid.

50 Λύπην γάρ φαμεν οὐ τὴν παράλογον καὶ τῶν πολλῶν ἐπὶ στερήσει παθῶν ἢ πραγμάτων ὑλικῶν τὴν ψυχὴν βασανίζουσαν, ὡς τὰς ὁρμὰς παρὰ φύσιν ἐφ' ἃ μὴ δεῖ, καὶ τὰς ἀποφυγὰς ἀφ' ὧν μὴ δεῖ, ποιουμένων, ἀλλὰ τὴν λελογισμένην καὶ τοῖς τὰ θεῖα σοφοῖς ἐγκριθεῖσαν καὶ τὸ παρὸν κακὸν ὑποσημαίνουσαν. Παρὸν γὰρ κακόν φασιν εἶναι τὴν λύπην, συνισταμένην μὲν κατὰ ψυχήν, ὅταν ἡ κατ' αἴσθησιν ἡδονὴ τῆς λογικῆς κρατῇ διακρίσεως, ὑφισταμένην δὲ κατ' αἴσθησιν, ὅταν τῆς ψυχῆς κατ' ἀρετὴν ἀκωλύτως ὁ δρόμος ἀνύηται, τοσοῦτον ἐπάγων τῇ αἰσθήσει τοὺς πόνους, ὅσον ἡδονὴν ἐμποιεῖ καὶ χαρὰν τῇ ψυχῇ τῷ θεῷ προσαγομένῃ διὰ τῆς συγγενοῦς κατ' ἀρετήν τε καὶ γνῶσιν ἐλλάμψεως. Ibid. (CCSG 2: 37).

7 The Eschatological Consequences of Maximus's Teaching on Grief

As described above, wisely discerned grief has a positive place in the ascetic life of a Christian, training the soul to receive spiritual joy. On this basis, does grief have a life or purpose beyond this temporal existence or is it simply an emotional event that is useful as we pass through this life? Maximus allows for forms of grief that extend beyond the earthly realm. Writings dated relatively to the same period as *Ad Thalassium*, *Letter 4*, and *Questions and Doubts*,[51] discuss grief as an eternal emotional reality belonging to the divinized, not just a temporary emotion that is useful in the training of Christian asceticism in this life.

In *Letter 4*, Maximus remains in exegetical territory, responding to John Cubicularius's question about godly sorrow (ἡ κατὰ Θεὸν λύπη) discussed in 2 Cor 7:10. The beginning of Maximus's letter indicates an extremely positive appreciation of this emotion: "I rejoice and am glad, for throughout this entire letter, I find my blessed master suffering praiseworthy grief."[52] He extols grief as the mother of the virtues,[53] and he who possesses it remains unperturbed by corruptible things and the attacks of the evil one.[54] He urges Christians to have a close association with grief, to "enclose it in the depth of their heart," "bind themselves to it indissolubly," or "bind it entirely to himself."[55] Grief reminds the Christian of the reality of divine judgment.[56] However, grief is not solely a human product. Maximus teaches that it is ultimately a gift of the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit creates this grief, frequenting the hearts of the worthy."[57]

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51 Sherwood dates this letter rather early, prior to 626. Booth and Jankowiak date it to before 642, "but it is impossible to be more precise." "A New Date List," in *OHMC*, 38. For *Quaestiones et Dubia*, Sherwood gives the *terminus ante quem* of 626, several years earlier than his dating of *Ad Thalassium.* Jankowiak and Booth date it around the same time as *Ad Thalassium*, before 633/634, rejecting Sherwood's dating that depends on the Constantinopolitan vita that they both rejected. Ibid., 29.

52 *Ep 4* (PG 91 413A). For the analysis of grief in *Letter* 4, I am indebted to the work of John Gavin, *"They are Like Angels in the Heavens": Angelology and Anthropology in the Thought of Maximus the Confessor* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2009), 222–225. For Maximus's thought on grief in a larger monastic context, see Id. "'The Grief Willed by God': Three Patristic Interpretations of 2 Cor 7:10," *Gregorianum* 91, no. 3 (2010): 427–442, esp. 438ff. My view on Maximus's teaching on grief largely agrees with Gavin's, though he presents a different view of the historical development of the argument of the earlier Fathers.

53 Ibid. (PG 91: 413C).

54 Ibid. (PG 91: C–D).

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid. (PG 91: 416 A–D).

57 Ibid. (PG 91: 413 D).

Elsewhere in *Questions and Doubts*, Maximus discusses the permanence of grief in a series of two responses to questions posed to him. He first addresses the appropriateness of the grief that might assail Job:

> *Question*: Whether it is inadmissible for Job that grief (λύπη) would come upon him?
>
> *Answer*: We say that Job became impervious to grief (ἀπαράδεκτον λύπης). For at the moment he piously performed the examination of created things and established in himself scorn for temporal things and love for eternal things, how at the transient sufferings which things naturally are prone to suffer on account of their change in state, could he not feel grief?[58]

Maximus develops his response into a conundrum. He lays out at the beginning that Job was impervious to grief, yet by the end admits a certain form of natural grief has to be permitted as the normal functioning of the human psyche. If we take Maximus at his word here, he simply reiterates Gregory of Nyssa, who opines that a "just and reasonable" grief has to do with the normal operation of human development. One will feel bites and pangs of sorrow from time to time, for such is the lot of temporal existence. If this were the case, Maximus would be advocating for something akin to the physicalized pangs of a *propassio*. However, his rhetorical question at the end of this passage leads to a more detailed response to the subsequent passage:

> *Question*: What, then? Did none of the saints experience grief? And why is it said, concerning many of the saints, that they did experience grief, as Paul also says, "I have continual grief"[59] and the rest?
>
> *Answer*: The person who concerns himself with practical things, when the conscience striking, stabs him by means of illusions based in memory completely grieves a praiseworthy grief (λυπεῖται πάντως τὴν ἐπαινετὴν λύπην). But the one who has arrived at the measure of perfection exists beyond this. For one who has been enlightened through

58 Εἰ ἄρα τῷ Ἰὼβ ἀπαράδεκτος γέγονεν ἡ λύπη ἐν τοῖς συμβεβηκόσιν αὐτῷ; Ἀπαράδεκτον λύπης γεγενῆσθαι λέγομεν τὸν Ἰώβ· ὁ γὰρ ἅπαξ εὐσεβῶς τὴν διάσκεψιν τῶν ὄντων ποιησάμενος καὶ βεβαιώσας ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸ πρὸς τὰ παροδεύοντα μῖσος καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὰ ἀπαρόδευτα ἀγάπην, πῶς παθοῦσιν τοῖς παροδικοῖς διὰ τῆς ἐναλλαγῆς τοῦ τρόπου, ὅπερ φυσικῶς πάσχειν εἰώθασιν, λυπεῖσθαι ἠδύνατο; *Qu. d.* 128 (CCSG 10, 93; trans. Prassas, 110, modified).

59 Rom 9:2.

> knowledge—having unfolded the intellectual aspect of the soul to God without division through a smoothness of movement, and having acquired the indescribable joy found in the continuous pleasure of divine beauty—how can he accept the sorrow that is opposed to this?[60]

Maximus advocates a laudable grief caused by the pricking of the conscience. Praiseworthy sorrow is concomitant with repentance from our former life, where we were misguided by temporal attachments. Yet, Maximus raises his own objection. Grief is fine for Christians on the way to salvation, but what happens to this morally good grief when in possession of eternal goods? Does grief simply cease because the deprivation of temporal pleasures does not bother the saint since he has attained eternal life?

To respond to this, Maximus describes the form of grief that occurs in the "holy ones" and in God in the heavenly realm:

> When the holy ones are said to grieve, it is in imitation of their master. For both sorrow and joy are ascribed to God, with respect to his providence. Grief on account of those perishing, joy on account of those being saved. The term "grief" is open and admits of multiple ways of being disposed. The sadness said to be among the holy ones is mercy, compassion, and an abundance of joy, when the fulfillment of the divine form is stored within and providentially distributed to things outside.[61]

Grief exists in heaven among the saints, not for their own sake but on "account of those lost," that is of sinners.[62] Notable here is that the praiseworthy

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60 Τί οὖν οὐδεὶς τῶν ἁγίων ἐδέξατο λύπην καὶ πῶς περὶ πολλῶν ἁγίων λέγεται λύπην ἐσχηκέναι, καθὰ καὶ Παῦλος λέγει ὅτι « λύπη μοί ἐστιν ἀδιάλειπτος » καὶ τὰ λοιπά; Ὁ μὲν περὶ τὰ πρακτὰ καταγινόμενος, ἕως ἂν ἡ συνείδησις αὐτὸν διὰ τὰς κατὰ μνήμην φαντασίας κεντᾷ πλήττουσα, λυπεῖται πάντως τὴν ἐπαινετὴν λύπην· ὁ δὲ εἰς τὸ τῆς τελειότητος μέτρον ἐφθακώς, καὶ ὑπὲρ ταύτην γίνεται· ὁ γὰρ διὰ γνώσεως πεφωτισμένος, τὸ νοερὸν τῆς ψυχῆς θεῷ ἀδιαιρέτως ἐξαπλώσας κατὰ τὴν ἴσην τῆς κινήσεως ταυτότητα, καὶ τὴν ἀνεκλάλητον χαρὰν ἐν τῇ διηνεκεῖ τοῦ θείου κάλλους τρυφῇ κτησάμενος, πῶς τὴν ταύτης ἀντικειμένην λύπην δέξηται; *Qu. d.* 129 (CCSG 10, 94; trans. Prassas, 110, modified).

61 Ποτὲ λυπεῖσθαι δὲ λέγονται οἱ ἅγιοι κατὰ μίμησιν τοῦ αὐτῶν δεσπότου· λέγεται γὰρ ἐπὶ θεοῦ καὶ λύπη καὶ χαρὰ κατὰ τὴν πρόνοιαν, λύπη μὲν ἐπὶ τῶν ἀπολλυμένων, χαρὰ δὲ ἐπὶ τῶν σῳζομένων. Εἷς οὖν ὁ λόγος τῆς λύπης, πολλοὺς ἐπιδέχεται τρόπους διαθέσεων. Ἡ οὖν λεγομένη ἐπὶ τῶν ἁγίων λύπη ἔλεός ἐστιν καὶ συμπάθεια καὶ χαρᾶς περιουσία, θεοειδοῦς τελειότητος ἔνδον ἀποκειμένης καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἐκτὸς προνοητικῶς διαδιδομένης. Ibid.

62 Note that this form of grief in the divinized does not necessarily abrogate divine justice. There is a tension in Maximian scholarship about the role of his eschatology, some arguing that he implicitly held some notion of the *apokatastasis*, others pointing out texts where Maximus speaks of "inexplicable torment" for those who have continually acted

grief associated with one's own natural life and with one's own repentance is not blotted out, but transmuted into a completely selfless expression of grief over the suffering of others. Specifically this form of grief imitates Christ. This Christoform participation in God's grief begins in a shadowy way on Earth. In his commentary on the Divine Liturgy, *Mystagogy*, Maximus describes God's experience of grief in which Christians are called to partake during this life.

> And if the poor man is God, it is because of God's condescension in becoming poor for us and in taking upon himself by his own suffering the sufferings of each one and "until the end of the ages,"[63] always suffering mystically out of goodness in proportion to each one's suffering. All the more reason, then, will that one be God who, by loving men in imitation of God, heals by himself in the divine fashion the hurts of those who suffer and who shows that he has in his disposition, safeguarding all proportion, the same power of saving providence that God has.[64]

More than highlighting the Christian imperative to be charitable, Christ's condescension to be poor provides the objective content of what we encounter when we suffer with the poverty of others. Christian commitment to this form of sympathy toward Christ in the poor cultivates divinization in us. Immediately before this passage, Maximus highlights that our willful sympathy for the other is the proof of transformative grace working within the Christian.[65] Maximus's starting point for grief is different. Grief for our sins and the willful acceptance for our sufferings amounts to more than mere self-improvement. This training renders the Christian more sensitive, allowing a share in grief's other-centeredness. This outwardly directed grief participates in the divine healing of those who suffer precisely "by loving men in imitation

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"against the grace of that which they were not worthy" during their life. *qu. Thal.* 59 (CCSG 22: 55); cf. *ambig.* 42 (PG 91: 1329A–B); *ambig.* 65 (PG 91: 1392C–D).

63 Mt 28:20.

64 Καὶ εἰ Θεὸς ὁ πτωχός, διὰ τὴν τοῦ δι' ἡμᾶς πτωχεύσαντος Θεοῦ συγκατάβασιν, καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἑκάστου συμπαθῶς ἀναδεχομένου πάθη καὶ μέχρι τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τοῦ ἐν ἑκάστῳ πάθους ἀεὶ δι' ἀγαθότητα πάσχοντος μυστικῶς, πλέον δηλονότι κατὰ τὸν εἰκότα λόγον ἔσται Θεός, ὁ κατὰ μίμησιν τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν τὰ τῶν παθόντων πάθη δι' ἑαυτοῦ θεοπρεπῶς ἐξιώμενος, καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν τῷ Θεῷ κατὰ ἀναλογίαν τῆς σωστικῆς προνοίας κατὰ διάθεσιν ἔχων δεικνύμενος δύναμιν. *Myst.* 24 (CCSG 69, 68; trans. Berthold, 212, modified).

65 *Myst.* 24 (CCSG 69, 67). For further comment, see Paul M. Blowers, "Pity, Empathy, and the Tragic Spectacle of Human Suffering: Exploring the Emotional Culture of Compassion in Late Ancient Christianity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18, no. 1 (2010): 1–27; Susan Wessel, *Passion and Compassion in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 172–204.

of God." Hence, as Gavin notes, "Grief is an *actual participation* in the angelic and divine life, since it is the sense of loss that takes place even in God through his desire to see all of creation become one through divinization."[66] As we have seen above, Maximus's exhortation to sympathize with our enemies to effect their own salvation hints at this perfected participation in God's grief for those non-saved.

The eternal dimension of the emotion of grief is much like Maximus's analysis of divinized fear. In both, they are shot through with the love of God. Furthermore, these emotions direct the ones experiencing them to move outside themselves. These two emotions differ in their object in Maximus's eschatological vision. In the case of grief, it takes the form of mercy toward non-divinized humans. Fear retains God as its object and its inspiration of awe-filled wonder. Maximus's vision of eternal life stretches the soul to accommodate emotions that in the temporal world are considered incongruent. With respect to the eternal status of grief, Maximus defines temporal grief as "absence of pleasure." In contrast, eternal grief, manifested as mercy, exists together with joy before the throne of God in the life of the saved. Yet, scriptural admonishments to rejoice while suffering signal how two incompatible emotional states can co-exist in this world. The culmination of this experience occurs in heaven, where participation in God's grief for the damned coincides with divine joy.

66 Gavin, *They are Like Angels*, 224. Italics in original.

CHAPTER 5

The Relationship between Love and Eschatological Apatheia

Abstract

The prior chapters have shown that the redeemed human emotions of fear and grief are both marked by a purified love. This chapter discusses Maximus's analysis of love in relationship to *apatheia*. The redemption of human desire begins with divine *philanthropia*, God's expression of his desire for us. I discuss the prior patristic appropriation of this term, which Maximus integrates into his own teaching on human passibility. Fundamentally, the ultimate act of divine philanthropia occurs on the Cross, where Christ transfigures human desire, opening the possibility for our own affective conversion. I then discuss how Maximus envisions love as the integrating factor of human emotion and how Maximus relates this redeemed eros to his understanding of eschatological *apatheia*, his concept of "ever-moving repose." For Maximus, redeemed human emotion plays a key role in providing a way to have movement that guards against the threat of corruption in his vision of eternity.

In his book *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Jean-Luc Marion begins with the observation: "Philosophy today no longer says anything about love, or at best very little. And this silence is for the better, because when philosophy does venture to speak of love it mistreats it or betrays it."[1] Instead, the following chapter of this book proceeds more cautiously, aiming to present not a contemporary iteration, but a retrieval of a specific aspect of Maximus's account of desirous love in line with our current discussion of human emotion. Hence, in the final chapter, I will explore love as it relates to our current theme of the healing of human emotions and *apatheia*. As I have described above, the presence of love is consistent throughout Maximus's description of perfected human emotion. As seen in Maximus's description of the saints, holy fear is shot through with divine desire, while the grief of the divinized coincides with the experience of divine joy. Maximus uses these emotional states to describe his vision of *apatheia*. Hence *apatheia* is a state full of redeemed emotional content, which

1 Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1.

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at its base requires a purified love. Yet, for Maximus purified, human love depends on unconditional, divine love, as Maximus writes in *Letter 2*: "For nothing is more truly Godlike than divine love, nothing more mysterious, nothing more apt to raise up human beings to deification."[2] For this reason, Maximus understands Christianity is nothing more than training in love.[3] This exercise of love is perfected in *apatheia*. The re-education of our desires takes place on interrelated levels. First, God redeems human passibility in Christ. Maximus understands this condescension as an expression of divine *philanthropia*. I will discuss the philosophical and prior patristic tradition of divine *philanthropia* to show how Maximus creatively integrates this concept into his own theology. Christ's divine philanthropia forms the objective condition whereby every Christian can subjectively appropriate divine love. Put simply, *philanthropia* is the way God demonstrates desire for humanity. Our imitation of this divine desire integrates our disordered passions. Transfigured by love, these redeemed emotions indicate how Maximus envisions activity at the highest level of *apatheia*, which he equates with the eschatological rest that awaits the divinized in heaven.

1 Stoic and Platonic Philanthropia: the Providential Care of the Universe

Maximus's understanding of *philanthropia* depends on earlier pagan and Christian usage.[4] In the Hellenistic period, just and equitable rulers, both human and divine, possess *philanthropia*. This virtue is characterized by beneficence shown to people of lower estate. In the case of the gods, *philanthropia* amounts to a certain condescension to mortals. Temporal rulers demonstrate *philanthropia* to those less fortunate. The Stoics conceive of god as *philanthropos*, which denotes the divinity's just ordering of and providential care for the universe, a key aspect of god's identity:[5] Stoics strongly emphasize god's wise

2 *Ep.* 2 (PG 91: 393B; trans. Louth, 85).

3 Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 38.

4 For detailed analysis of this theme, see Catherine Osborne, *Eros Unveiled* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, esp. 172–200). My views on the classical understanding of *philanthropia* are indebted to her work.

5 Cicero, reporting the Stoic view, writes: "The Stoics, for example, establish the existence of divination by the following process of reasoning: "If there are gods and they do not make clear to man in advance what the future will be, then they do not love man (*diligunt homines*); or, they themselves do not know what the future will be; or, they think which it is of no advantage to man to know what it will be; or, they think it inconsistent with their dignity to give man forewarnings of the future; or, finally, they, though gods, cannot give intelligible

governance of the cosmos: For example, in Cleanthes's *Hymn to Zeus*, Zeus's lightning bolt in hand is not a weapon of torture, but an instrument for the constructive, directive force of the cosmos.[6] God likewise expresses his providential care through his immanent presence in matter, where he is coextensive with matter as the active, seminal fluid of the world.[7]

Unlike the Stoics, Platonists vary significantly in their conception of *philanthropia*. In his *Laws*, Plato holds a view similar to the Stoics regarding god's providential care. In his myth about Chronos, Plato explains that god, insofar as he is *philanthropos*, wisely establishes earthly rulers to govern human beings.[8] In contrast, Neoplatonists fail to mention *philanthropia* in reference to the divine. It occurs nowhere in Plotinus, nor does Porphyry speak of it as a divine attribute.[9] Proclus speaks of some form of divine condescension, but in a very limited sense.[10] Whereas in Stoicism, god exercises his providential *philanthropia* through his immanence to creation, Plato's god does so from a transcendent distance. Nevertheless, the end result is the same and distinguishes pagan *philanthropia* from Christian *philanthropia*. In both Stoic

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signs of coming events. But it is not true that the gods do not love us, for they are the friends and benefactors of the human race (*sunt enim benefici generique hominum amici*)." Cicero, *De div.* 1.82 (trans. Falconer, 315).

6 "Such is the double-edged firey ever-living thunderbolt which you hold at the ready in your unvanquished hands. For under its strokes all the works of nature are accomplished. With it you direct the universal reason which runs through all things and intermingles with the lights of heaven both great and small." Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*, *LS* 54I (1.326). Zeno makes a distinction between ordinary fire and the constructive fire, which causes growth and the preservation of the universe. See *Stobaeus* 1.213.15–21 *LS* 46D (1.275).

7 See Diogenes Laertius, 7.135–136, *LS* 46B (1.275). Cf. Osborne, *Eros Unveiled*, 172–173.

8 "In like manner the God, in his love for humanity (ταὐτὸν δὴ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἅρα καὶ φιλάνθρωπος ὤν), set over us at which time the nobler race of daemons who, with much comfort to themselves and much to us, took charge of us and furnished peace and modesty and orderliness and justice without stint, and thus made the tribes of men free from feud and happy. And even today this tale has a truth to tell, namely, which wherever a State has a mortal, and no god, for ruler, there the people have no rest from ills and toils; and it deems which we ought by every means to imitate the life of the age of Chronos, as tradition paints it." *Laws* 713d–e. He also discusses the higher caring for the lower in *Phaedrus* 246B.

9 Osborne wonders whether Porphyry avoided the term because of its growing use by Christian writers like Clement and Origen. Osborne, *Eros Unveiled*, 181.

10 See John M. Rist, "A Note on Eros and Agape in Pseudo-Dionysius," *Vigiliae Christianae* 20, no. 4 (1966): 239; A. H. Armstrong, "Platonic Eros and Christian Agape," *The Downside Review* 79 (1961): 105–121. For a recent study on the influence of Proclus and Maximus (though avoiding the mediating work of Dionysius), see also Frederick Lauritzen, "Pagan Energies in Maximus the Confessor: The Influence of Proclus on Ad Thomam 5," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 52 (2012): 226–239.

immanence and Platonic transcendence, god remains separate, preferring not to mingle with humanity's mess.

2 The Personalization of Philanthropia of Christ in Clement and Origen

Beginning with Clement, but especially in Origen, the emerging Christian tradition applies this concept of *philanthropia* to the Incarnation, emphasizing that God's care for humankind entails his willful association with human fleshly existence. Clement formulates his understanding of divine *philanthropia* according to Stoic principles, recognizing the beneficial care God provides for his creation.[11] Yet Clement considers Christ's becoming "human (ἄνθρωπος) for our sake" as the supreme example of God's love for humanity.[12] Building on Clement, Origen incorporates *philanthropia* into his understanding of God's revelation to humanity, both in Scripture and in the Incarnation. God exhibits his *philanthropia* first in his submission to the written word in Scripture. Through this humbling act of allowing the divine Word to be circumscribed by human words, God allows the simplest of minds to grasp the modest prose of revelation.[13] Origen underscores the simplicity of the words of Scripture to demonstrate revelation's universality, which aims at the educated and

11 The following passage from Clement reflects Stoic syllogistic argumentation associating God with *philanthropia*: "One who loves something wishes to benefit it; and that which benefits must be completely superior to that which does not benefit; but nothing is superior to the good; therefore the good benefits. God is agreed to be good; therefore God benefits. But the good insofar as it is good does nothing but benefit; therefore God benefits everything. And of course he does not benefit man in one respect but not take care of him, nor does he take care of him but not also attend to him; for that which benefits in accordance with rational judgment is superior to that which does not benefit in this way; but nothing is superior to god; and benefiting in accordance with rational judgment is nothing but attending to man; therefore God cares for and attends to man." Clement, *paed.* 1.8.63 (SC 70: 22); trans. *LS* 60I (1.371–372). For comment on the Stoic background to this passage, see *LS* 60 (1.374; 2.369).

12 *paed.* 1.8.62 (SC 70: 222). Clement still applies *philanthropia* as a quality of God the Father and the Logos, while admitting that the Incarnation is the ultimate example of *philanthropia*, see *paed.*, *Introduction* (SC 70: 1.6.36, 176). It is only with Origen that we get exacting precision relating *philanthropia* to the Incarnation and drawing from an idea already nascent in Clement.

13 "Such, indeed, was the abounding love which He had for men, which He gave to the more learned a theology capable of raising the soul far above all earthly things; while with no less consideration He comes down to the weaker capacities of ignorant men, of simple women, of slaves, and, in short, of all those who from Jesus alone could have received which help for the better regulation of their lives which is supplied by his instructions in

uneducated alike. Osborne points out that God's condescension in Scripture parallels closely the humiliation that Christ endures by becoming human and dying on the Cross.[14] *Philanthropia* becomes Origen's preferred term for this kenotic incarnate love of God.[15]

3 The Ecstatic Dimension of Divine Philanthropia in Dionysius

While Dionysius limits discussion of the Incarnation in his theology,[16] nevertheless in his *Divine Names*, he characterizes God as an ecstatic lover who goes outside himself both to create and to continually care for his creation. For Dionysius, this ecstatic love is also congruent with the providential concern involved in *philanthropia*. Although the Incarnation is not a principle theme in Dionysius, when he does discuss it, he consistently speaks of it in terms of *philanthropia*:

> By resorting to the perceptible, to imagery, he makes clear that which gives life to our minds. He offers Jesus Christ to our view. He shows how out of love for humanity (φιλάνθρωπως) Christ emerged from the hiddenness of his divinity to take on human shape, to be utterly incarnate among us yet while remaining unmixed. He shows how he came down to us from his own natural unity to our own fragmented level, yet without change. He shows how, inspired by love for us, his kindly activities called the human race to enter participation with himself and to have a share in his own goodness.[17]

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regard to the Divine Being, adapted to their wants and capacities." *Cels.* 7.41 (SC 150: 110; trans. ANF 4: 627).

14 See *Comm. in Iohannem*, 6.57 (SC 157: 170); Osborne, 178–179.

15 See *Comm. in Iohannem*, 2.18 (SC 120: 218); 2.31.187 (SC 120: 226). On love generally in Origen, see Hannah Hunt, "Love," in *Westminster Handbook to Origen*, ed. John A. McGuckin (Louisville: John Knox, 2004), 145–146.

16 For reasons why, see John M. Rist, "Pseudo-Dionysius, Neoplatonism, and the Weakness of the Soul," in *From Athens to Chartres: Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought: Studies in Honour of Edouard Jeauneau*, ed. H. J. Westra (Leiden: Brill 1992), 135–161.

17 *e.h.* 444C (CD 36: 93; trans. Luibheid 222–223). Cf. *d.n.* 592A (CD: 113: 33). For further comment on this passage and Dionysius's vision on the Incarnation, see Alexander Golitzen, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*, ed. Bogdan G. Bucur (Collegeville: Cistercian, 2013), 268–271. The strongly Christological character of this passage runs against the common Protestant criticism—most prominently launched by Martin Luther—that Dionysius was more Platonist than Christian. For a review of this historical problem regarding the reception of Dionysius, see Paul Rorem, *The Dionysian Mystical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress 2015), 101–119.

Following Clement and Origen, Dionysius relates *philanthropia* to Christ's descent in the flesh. Dionysius is at pains to maintain Christ's perfection during his earthly life, reminding that he remains "unmixed" while he dwells at the fragmented level. Nevertheless, this earthly sojourn aims at healing the fragmentation, which cannot come about without Christ's intervention into this world. Divine *philanthropia* is characterized by this ecstatic eros; God yearns for and reaches out to gather the scattered into unity, remaining unmixed, while cleaning up the mess through his life-giving death.

4 Philanthropia of Christ in *Ad Thalassium*

Maximus follows this earlier tradition by using *philanthropia* to describe the Incarnation. The first instance occurs in *Question 8*, one of the shortest responses in *Ad Thalassium*. Maximus responds to a question regarding a tension in the text of 1 John:

> *Question*: Why does the Holy John say again "God is light"[18] and soon after say, "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light"?[19] How also can the same person be called "light" and "be in the light," like he is another being in another substance?
>
> *Response*: God is truly light according to essence for those who walk in him through the virtues; these people become truly light. So, they become light by participation like all the saints, who, through love of God (διὰ φιλοθεῖαν), are in the light according to essence. In the same way, the light is in those, who, according to essence are "in the light" through participation (κατὰ μέθεξιν) according to God's love for man (διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν). Therefore, if we are in the light of God, according to virtue and knowledge, and God himself, being light, is in the light in us. For God is light by nature and becomes light by imitation (ἐν τῷ μιμήσει γίνεται φωτί), like the archetype in an icon.
>
> Or instead, God is light and the Father is in the light, clearly this means in the Son and in the Spirit. Not one light, another, a second, another, a

18 1 Jn 1:5.
19 1 Jn 1:7.

> third, but one and the other, according to essence, the threefold light according to their mode of existence.[20]

Maximus makes sense of the apparent inconsistency in describing God both as "light" and "in the light,"[21] not with an either/or, but a both/and approach. For Maximus, human beings on the path of sanctity "walk in the light." God is "in the light" insofar as he dwells in the soul of those who persevere in holiness. They participate in God and therefore share in his essence.[22] Maximus couples the ascent to God with his own descent, speaking in analogous terms. The saints join themselves to God out of their love for Him (διὰ φιλοθεΐαν), while God abides in the saints out of His love for mankind (διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν).

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20 Ἐπειδὴ πάλιν λέγει ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστι, καὶ πάλιν μετ' ὀλίγα ἐὰν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν, ὡς αὐτός ἐστιν ἐν τῷ φωτί, πῶς καὶ φῶς ὁ αὐτὸς λέγεται, καὶ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι, ὡς ἄλλος ἐν ἄλλῳ; Ἀπόκρισις. Ὁ κατ' οὐσίαν ἀληθῶς φῶς ὑπάρχων θεὸς ἐν τοῖς ἐν αὐτῷ διὰ τῶν ἀρετῶν περιπατοῦσίν ἐστιν, ἀληθῶς φῶς γενομένοις. Ὥσπερ οὖν τὸ κατὰ μέθεξιν φῶς, ὡς οἱ ἅγιοι πάντες διὰ φιλοθεΐαν ἐν τῷ κατ' οὐσίαν γίνονται φωτί, οὕτω τὸ κατ' οὐσίαν ἐν τῷ κατὰ μέθεξιν φωτὶ διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν γίνεται φῶς. Ἐὰν οὖν ἐσμεν κατὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ τὴν γνῶσιν ὡς ἐν φωτὶ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεός, ὡς φῶς, ἐν φωτί ἐστιν ἐν ἡμῖν. Ὁ γὰρ φύσει φῶς ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῷ μιμήσει γίνεται φωτί, ὡς ἐν εἰκόνι ἀρχέτυπον. Ἢ μᾶλλον, φῶς ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ ἐν φωτί, δηλαδὴ τῷ υἱῷ καὶ τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, οὐκ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο φῶς ὑπάρχων, ἀλλὰ κατ' οὐσίαν ἓν καὶ τὸ αὐτό, κατὰ τὸν τῆς ὑπάρξεως τρόπον τρισσοφαές. (CCSG 7: 77).

21 Light is used as an image in doctrinal debates to distinguish God the Father from God the Son, as here in Origen: "God is light, according to John. The only-begotten Son therefore is the brightness of which light, proceeding from God without separation as brightness from light, and lightening the whole creation." *princ.* 1.2.7 (SC 252: 124; trans. Butterworth 28); cf. Gregory Nazianzus *Or.* 28.13 (SC 250: 126–128); 29.17 (SC 250: 212–214). For an exploration of this image and its use in the formulation of dogma in early Christian thought, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Light of the World: A Basic Image in Early Christian Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). Maximus is doing something different relating the light of God and human participation in the light vis-à-vis growth in sanctity. This framework will have resonances in later Byzantine Greek thought; cf. Symeon the New Theologian, *The Discourses* 15.3; 33.2, trans. C. J. De Catanzaro (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1980), 195, 341. For a good overview of the concept of light in the Byzantine Christian world in relation to its patristic background, see John Behr, "Let There be Light!: A Byzantine Theology of Light," in *Light from Light: Scientists and Theologians in Dialogue*, ed. Gerald O'Collins and Mary Ann Meyers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 183–207.

22 Participation is an important but widely debated theme in Maximus. For a summary of the different scholarly positions and a helpful explanation of how participation functions in Maximus, see Marius Portaru, "Gradual Participation according to St. Maximus the Confessor," in *Studia Patristica* 68, ed. Markus Vinzent (Louvain: Peeters, 2013), 281–294. See also Perl, "Methexis: Creation, Incarnation, and Deification in Saint Maximus the Confessor"; Tollefson, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 126–132.

In this way, Maximus considers how God can both be "in the light" and the "light" himself. For those who are divinized, they are light and God's light dwells in them. He discusses God's condescension into the human soul of the divinized as "becoming light by imitation (ἐν τῷ μιμήσει γίνεται φωτί)."

Maximus argues that God, who is light by nature, acts as if he were not light. Who then is God imitating by "becoming light?" He is acting like man. For Maximus, this is a subtle allusion to the enfleshment of the Son of Man. Elsewhere, Maximus speaks about the presence of God in the world as an "Incarnation" or "embodiment." In a passage in his *Ambigua*, he describes three incarnations of the Word: in Scripture, in the created world, and in the historical Incarnation.[23] Elsewhere, Maximus includes a fourth incarnation—the incarnation of the Word in the lives of the saints through virtue: "In the practical life, the Word is thickened through the exercise of virtue [and] becomes flesh."[24] Maximus's description of becoming light by imitation in the soul of the divinized reflects this latter sense. He makes this point clearer by describing God's presence in the soul of the saint as the way the "archetype is in the icon." That the divine essence is somehow present in its iconographic image anticipates John of Damascus's defense of iconography in the iconoclast controversy two centuries later.[25]

Christ's assumption of human passibility conditions Maximus's understanding of *philanthropia*, which is epitomized in his willing assent to suffering and death on the Cross. This effects the liberation of man from the passions. In *Question 21*, Maximus writes:

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23 Cf. *ambig.* 33 (PG 91: 1285c–1288a). On this theme in Maximus, see Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy*, 117–122; Cooper, *The Body in Maximus the Confessor*, 42–45. Torstein Theodor Tollefsen makes a distinction between the "historical Incarnation" and two other "metaphorical embodiments." See id., *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Against this view, see Eric Perl, "Metaphysics and Christology in Maximus the Confessor and Eriugena," in *Eriugena East and West: Papers for the Eighth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, Chicago and Notre Dame, 18–20 October 1991*, ed. Bernard McGinn and Willemien Otten (South Bend: Notre Dame Press, 1992), 253–270.

24 Ἐν μὲν πρακτικῷ, τοῖς τῶν ἀρετῶν τρόποις πεχυνόμενος ὁ λόγος, γίνεται σάρξ. *Cap. th. oec.* 2.37 (PG 90: 1141C). On the relationship between this text and Maximus's account of the Incarnation, see Cooper, *The Body in Maximus the Confessor*, 34ff.

25 Cf. *ambig.* 10 (PG 91: 1196A). Andrew Louth notes the relationship between Maximus's thought and John's teaching on icons, see id., *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 213–215.

> Therefore, because of his love for man, the only begotten Son and Word of God becomes perfect man, in order to deliver human nature from this wretched helplessness; He possessed sinlessness without incorruptibility, receiving from Adam the first existence according to natural birth (κατὰ τὴν γένεσιν). He assumed passibility without sin, from the latter birth (ἐκ τῆς ὕστερον … γεννήσεως) joined to our nature because of sin.[26]

In binding himself to humanity, Christ unties Adam's relationship to pleasure by becoming the first human being to engage in human affairs with a correct relationship to pleasure. Maximus here employs the coupling of γενέσις/γεννήσις—a verbal pun familiar in Maximus's work with echoes from Plato's *Timaeus*—to describe Adam's creation and fall. As a result, both human birth and human passibility are bound up in sinful passionate existence. Maximus returns to this concept of two births in *Question 61*. Christ, in becoming man, takes the place of Adam and submits himself to Adam's liability to human passion:

> For this reason, the Logos of God, who is fully divine by nature became fully human, is composed of an intellectual soul and a passible body, just like us, only without sin. His birth from a woman within time was not preconditioned in any way by the pleasure derived from the transgression, but, in his love for mankind, he willingly appropriated the pain that is the end of human nature, the pain resulting from unrighteous pleasure.[27]

Maximus here describes God's *philanthropia* as his willing embrace of human passibility, specifically pain and death. Maximus understands that the pain associated with death is an effect of original sin, from which man tries to escape. In undergoing death, Christ takes the sting out of it, so that he "might erase the just finality which human nature encounters in death, since his own end

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26 Γενόμενος οὖν ὑπὲρ φιλανθρωπίας ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ μονογενὴς υἱὸς καὶ λόγος τέλειος ἄνθρωπος, διὰ τὸ ταύτης τῆς πονηρᾶς ἐξελέσθαι τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων φύσιν ἀμηχανίας, ἐκ μὲν τῆς κατὰ τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ Ἀδὰμ πρώτης συστάσεως λαβὼν εἶχε δίχα τῆς ἀφθαρσίας τὸ ἀναμάρτητον, ἐκ δὲ τῆς ὕστερον διὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐπεισαχθείσης τῇ φύσει γεννήσεως μόνον εἴληφε δίχα τῆς ἁμαρτίας τὸ παθητόν. (CCSG 7: 129).

27 διὰ τοῦτο, θεὸς ὑπάρχων τέλειος κατὰ φύσιν ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος γίνεται τέλειος ἄνθρωπος, ἐκ ψυχῆς νοερᾶς καὶ σώματος παθητοῦ κατὰ φύσιν παραπλησίως ἡμῖν χωρὶς μόνης ἁμαρτίας συνεστώς, τὴν μὲν ἐκ τῆς παρακοῆς ἡδονὴν οὐδαμῶς τὸ σύνολον ἐσχηκὼς προηγουμένην αὐτοῦ τῆς ἐκ γυναικὸς ἐν χρόνῳ γεννήσεως, τὴν δὲ δι' αὐτὴν ὀδύνην, ὑπάρχουσαν τέλος τῆς φύσεως, διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν κατὰ θέλησιν προσηκάμενος. *qu. Thal.* 61 (CCSG 22: 87–89; trans. Blowers and Wilken, 133–134, modified).

did not have, as the cause of its existence, the illicit pleasure on account of which he came and which he subjected to his righteous punishment."[28] The summit of God's *philanthropia* is paradoxically Christ's death on the Cross. By this death, Christ grants man a "new beginning, a second nativity,"[29] one that does not empty human life of passibility, but allows for a redeemed version of it in the human heart.

5 Agape—Paul's Superior Apostolic Charism

How does humanity respond to and incorporate God's love, both modeled and offered in his *philanthropia?* Maximus discusses ἀγάπη as a unifying feature of spiritual gifts in *Question 29*.[30] Thalassius asks Maximus about Paul's apparent disobedience to the Spirit in Acts 21: "Why does it read in Acts that certain people under the influence of the Spirit urged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem? Why did he disobey the Spirit and go?"[31] Maximus responds to resolve this textual tension and to defend Paul against any blasphemous action against the Holy Spirit. First, basing himself on Isaiah, Maximus alerts the reader that the diversity of charisms or spirits are spoken about in Scripture. Maximus explains that the prophecy of Isaiah alludes to "different energies of the one and same Holy Spirit."[32] Maximus goes on to say that Paul received "the direct Spirit of the

28 τὸ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου δίκαιον τέλος ἐξαφανίσῃ τῆς φύσεως, οὐκ ἔχον τήν, δι' ἣν ἐπεισῆλθεν καὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δικαίως τιμωρουμένην, ὡς αἰτίαν τοῦ εἶναι, παράνομον ἡδονήν. Ibid. (CCSG 22: 89; trans. Blowers and Wilken, 134).

29 Γέγονεν οὖν ὁ θεὸς κατ' ἀλήθειαν ἄνθρωπος καὶ δέδωκεν ἄλλην ἀρχὴν τῇ φύσει δευτέρας γενέσεως, διὰ πόνου πρὸς ἡδονὴν μελλούσης ζωῆς καταλήγουσαν. Ibid. (CCSG 22: 91).

30 Following Dionysius, Maximus considers *agape* and *eros* to be synonyms, as both mean "a capacity to effect a unity, an alliance, and a particular comingling in the Beautiful and the Good" (*De div. nom.* 4.12). When pressed, he would side with the precision of Gregory of Nyssa, for whom *eros* is an intense form of *agape* (ἐπιτεταμένη ἀγάπη). *Hom in Cant.* 13 (GNO 6: 383).

31 Τί ἐστι τὸ ἐν ταῖς Πράξεσι κείμενον οἵτινες διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ἔλεγον τῷ Παύλῳ μὴ ἀναβαίνειν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα; Διὰ τί παρήκουσε τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ ἀνέβη; *qu. Thal.* 29 (CCSG 7: 211). Cf. Acts 21:4–15. Maximus uses frequently Isaiah 11:1–3 to talk about the diversity of spirits, which helps explicate his theology of the *logoi.* See *qu. Thal.* 54 (CCSG 7: 461–463); *qu. Thal.* 63 (CCSG 22: 145–149).

32 Ὁ μὲν ἅγιος Ἡσαΐας ὁ προφήτης ἐν τῇ κατ' αὐτὸν προφητείᾳ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τῷ ἐκ τῆς ῥίζης Ἰεσσαὶ ἀνατείλαντι σωτῆρι λέγει ἐπαναπαύεσθαι, οὐχ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ γινώσκων καὶ οὕτω τοὺς ἄλλους ἐκδέχεσθαι διδάσκων, ἀλλὰ τὰς ἐνεργείας τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος πνεύματα καλέσας διὰ τὸ πάσῃ ἐνεργείᾳ ὅλον ἀνελλιπῶς ὑπάρχειν ἀναλόγως τὸ ἐνεργοῦν ἅγιον πνεῦμα. *qu. Thal.* 29 (CCSG 7: 211); cf. Is 11:1–3; 1 Cor 12:4. Maximus engages Isaiah 11 at length in *qu. Thal.* 63 (CCSG 22: 153–159). On the theme of divine energies in Maximus, see Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of Maximus the Confessor*, 160–189; Antoine Levy,

perfect grace of love for God."[33] According to Maximus, Paul's grace is superior to the grace of prophecy received by those who urge him not to go to Jerusalem. Because of Paul's possession of this grace, the apostle ignores those who try to hold him back, preferring "divine love, which transcends comprehension."[34] Maximus says Paul's motivation to go to Jerusalem was for the sake of those who prophesied:

> Or rather, without disobeying the Spirit, Paul ascended, leading by the type within himself (τῷ καθ' ἑαυτὸν τύπῳ), according to his yearning (κατὰ τὴν ἔφεσιν), those who prophesied by the energy given to them by the Spirit equally according to their charism, toward the desire above all things (πρὸς τὸν τοῦ παντὸς ὑπερέκεινα πόθον).[35]

Paul goes to Jerusalem in an effort to offer the knowledge of the Spirit he has to those who advise him to the contrary. He does so by directing them towards the "desire above all things. (πρὸς τὸν τοῦ παντὸς ὑπερέκεινα πόθον)."[36] Such a desire is only for a divine object, which is, God. Maximus tells us that Paul is already in possession of this divine love "beyond comprehension" and desires the same for those around him.

Maximus describes Paul as instantiating Christ. Paul is a leader precisely because he is "type within himself (τῷ καθ' ἑαυτὸν τύπῳ)."[37] According to Maximus, Paul possesses an "apostolic charism," which is superior to the prophetic charism. With this charism, he "becomes another Christ (ἄλλος γέγηται Χριστός), having accomplished through the imitation of Christ (μιμήσει τοῦ Χριστοῦ) all the things for which Christ assumed in the flesh according to

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Le créé et l'incréé: Maxime le Confesseur et Thomas d'Aquin (Paris: Librairie Philosophique Vrin, 2006). David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 188–207.

33 Οὐκοῦν ὁ μέγας ὄντως καὶ τῶν ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον μυστηρίων γενόμενος διάκονος Παῦλος, ἀμέσως τῆς ἐν ἀγάπῃ θεοῦ τελείας χάριτος τὸ πνεῦμα δεξάμενος. *qu. Thal.* 29 (CCSG 7: 212).

34 τῶν εἰληφότων τὸ χάρισμα τῆς τελείας εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγάπης λεγόντων αὐτῷ μὴ ἀναβαίνειν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τουτέστι τοῦ ἐνεργουμένου αὐτοῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγάπης χαρίσματος—ταὐτὸν γὰρ τῷ χαρίσματι τὸ πνεῦμα, καθὼς ἔφην ἐκ τοῦ προφήτου λαβών, παρήκουσεν, ἀσυγκρίτως τῆς ἐξ ἄλλων εἰς αὐτὸν πνευματικῆς ἀγάπης προκρίνων τὴν θείαν καὶ ὑπὲρ νόησιν. Ibid. (CCSG 7: 212).

35 μᾶλλον δὲ οὐδὲ παρακούσας ἀνῆλθεν, ἀλλ' ἐκείνους διὰ τῆς συμμέτρως αὐτοῖς κατὰ τὸ χάρισμα δοθείσης ἐνεργείας τοῦ πνεύματος προφητεύοντας τῷ καθ' ἑαυτὸν τύπῳ πρὸς τὸν τοῦ παντὸς ὑπερέκεινα πόθον κατὰ τὴν ἔφεσιν ἕλκων. Ibid. (CCSG 7: 212).

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

the economy in his love for mankind (φιλανθρώπως)."[38] Hence, the charism of divine love is Christological in character. The gift of divine love enables Paul to perform the same things Christ did while on Earth. In the case of Acts, Paul goes to Jerusalem not to suppress those who prophesied against him. Rather, he ascends to reorient the inferior charisms with his apostolic charism of love and to lead them to the summit of desire, that is, to Christ himself. Love is not just a motivating force for the one in possession, but a guide and an encouragement to lead others to the same desire.[39]

6 Love: Unifying the Fractured Human Psyche

For Maximus, Paul's gift of love does more than bind together various personalities in the Christian community. Love also unifies the fragmented, fallen human psyche, calming the vicious conflicts between unbridled, sinful desires. For example, in *Question 40*, Maximus interprets John 2, meditating on the reason Christ orders the servants to distribute the water into six jars. Maximus speaks of love as the most generic of the virtues (γενικωτάτην) and, playing on the number six, describes how the generic virtue is distributed among the six types of sufferers named in Matthew 25—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned.[40] This rightly ordered love undergirds and harmonizes individual acts of charity toward those who suffer. Maximus contrasts these acts with his concept of self-love (φιλαυτία), which he describes in the *Introduction*. Self-love results in division: "dividing the one essence into

38 ὁ δέ, πρὸς μόνον ἀφορῶν τὸν θεῖον σκοπόν, εἰς οὐδὲν ἡγεῖτο τὰ μέσα πάντα, σπουδὴν ἔχων οὐχ ὅπως διενέγκῃ τὰ συμβησόμενα, ἀλλ' ὅπως ἄλλος γένηται Χριστός, μιμήσει τοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντα κατορθώσας τὰ δι' ἃ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐν σαρκὶ φιλανθρώπως κατ' οἰκονομίαν εἵλετο ζωήν. Ibid. (CCSG 7: 215).

39 The prioritizing of the apostolic over the prophetic charism has Montanist resonances. However, Maximus's preference is likely his reading of Dionysius and lessons learned from *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, as Maximus later concludes: "This is a clear teaching in order not to mix any of the ranks of the Church, which have been well distinguished by the Spirit." Ibid. It is beyond the scope of the present work to discuss this further. For comment on the Dionysian position, see Golitzen, *Mystagogy*, 161–224. Louth sees Maximus's position on hierarchy as being more open to the laity's direct participation in God by virtue of their baptism, see Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 35. Larchet sees an echo of Dionysius in Maximus's understanding of hierarchy; see *La divinization de l'homme*, 434–435.

40 Γενικωτάτην οὖν τῶν ἀρετῶν φασιν εἶναι τὴν ἀγάπην, τὴν δὲ ταύτης ποιητικὴν γενικωτάτην τῆς φύσεως δύναμίν φασιν εἶναι τὸν λόγον· ὅς, τῆς οἰκείας ἀπρὶξ ἐπιλαβόμενος αἰτίας, ἐνεργούμενος εἰς ἓξ διακρίνεται γενικωτέρους τρόπους περιληπτικοὺς τῶν οἷς ὁ τῆς ἀγάπης διακρίνεσθαι πέφυκε λόγος εἰδῶν, πεινῶντας καὶ διψῶντας καὶ ξένους καὶ γυμνοὺς ἀσθενοῦντάς τε καὶ τοὺς ἐν φυλακῇ περιποιούμενος σωματικῶς τε καὶ πνευματικῶς. *ad. Thal* 40 (CCSG 7: 269–271).

many and opposing parts, and to say nothing more, these destructive parts tear one another apart."[41] Maximus thus sets up a parallel between Christ's miracle at Cana and the Christian transformation of the human mind.[42] The changing of water into wine prefigures the reintegration of disordered loves in the human psyche. Maximus explains this transformation as divinization (θέωσις), associating it with the stable emotional state of *apatheia*. As a consequence, divinization is a form of *apatheia*, a re-integrated, rightly ordered love for God and for neighbor that abides immutably in the perfect human psyche.[43]

Maximus teaches that the opposite of the unification of holy love is the disintegrated multiplicity of self-love (φιλαυτία). Maximus first speaks of self-love in the *Introduction*. Subsequent to original sin, humanity is subject to a chain reaction, one that continues to restrict desire to solely physical pleasures.[44] The remedy to reverse this chain reaction is twofold. First, one must renounce worldly attachments. Maximus writes: "The true love of God in understanding, as well as the soul's complete denial of the affections of the body and of this world, is deliverance from all these evils and the short road to salvation."[45]

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41 ἡ φιλαυτία τῆς ἑκάστου γνώμης ἐπινοήσασα τὴν ἡμερωτάτην ἐθηρίωσε φύσιν καὶ τὴν μίαν οὐσίαν εἰς πολλὰς καὶ ἀντιθέτους, οὐδὲν δὲ χεῖρον εἰπεῖν, καὶ φθαρτικὰς ἀλλήλων κατέτεμε μοίρας, Ibid.

42 "Jesus was there with his own mother in order to restore our knowledge, which had fallen due to sin." καὶ μετὰ τῆς ἰδίας μητρὸς παραγίνεσθαι τὸν Ἰησοῦν, ἵνα τὴν ἀπορρυεῖσαν ἡμῶν διὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἀποκαταστήσῃ γνῶσιν. Ibid. (CCSG 7: 275). Maximus interprets many biblical events as having consequence for the human psyche. In discussing the Last Supper in the upper room, he says the true Passover is the "passing of the Logos to the human mind." *qu. Thal.* 3 (CCSG 7: 59).

43 "[Divinization] strengthens natural knowledge and in a certain sense reinforces it in view of immutability (πρὸς ἀτρεψίαν) just like the water was changed in form to wine." [θέωσιν] τὴν στομοῦσαν καὶ οἱονεὶ νευροῦσαν πρὸς ἀτρεψίαν, καθάπερ ὕδωρ τονούμενον οἴνου ποιότητι, τὴν γνῶσιν τῆς φύσεως. *qu. Thal.* 40 (CCSG 7: 275).

44 "Hence, inasmuch as man was preoccupied with knowledge of visible realities only according to sense, in the same measure, he fastened himself tighter to the ignorance of God. Inasmuch as he tightened the latch of this ignorance, in the same measure, he clung to the experience of the physical enjoyment of material known to him. Inasmuch as man sated himself with sensual pleasure, in the same measure, he fastened himself to the desire (τὸν ἔρωτα) of self-love (τῆς φιλαυτίας) wrought by it." Ὅσον οὖν κατὰ μόνην τὴν αἴσθησιν τῆς τῶν ὁρωμένων ἐπεμελεῖτο γνώσεως ὁ ἄνθρωπος, τοσοῦτον ἐπέσφιγγεν ἑαυτῷ τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ἄγνοιαν· ὅσον δὲ ταύτης τῆς ἀγνοίας συνέσφιγγε τὸν δεσμόν, τοσοῦτον τῆς πείρας ἀντείχετο τῆς τῶν γνωσθέντων ὑλικῶν αἰσθητικῆς ἀπολαύσεως· ὅσον δὲ ταύτης ἐνεφορεῖτο, τοσοῦτον τῆς ἐκ ταύτης γεννωμένης φιλαυτίας ἐξῆπτε τὸν ἔρωτα· ὅσον δὲ πεφροντισμένως περιεποιεῖτο τῆς φιλαυτίας τὸν ἔρωτα. *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 31).

45 Πάντων δὲ τούτων τῶν κακῶν ἐστιν ἀπαλλαγὴ καὶ σύντομος πρὸς σωτηρίαν ὁδὸς ἡ ἀληθὴς τοῦ θεοῦ κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν ἀγάπη καὶ ἡ καθόλου τῆς κατὰ ψυχὴν πρός τε τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον στοργῆς ἐξάρνησις. Ibid. (CCSG 7: 39).

Second, the grace of God is necessary; it provides stability of soul through unity with God's love, preventing any lapse of return to the world:

> Let us seek only divine love and nothing shall separate us from God, neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor danger nor sword[46]—not even is it countable for the Holy Apostle in this passage! Since unwavering love abides in us, we receive from God eternal and unspeakable joy and stability (σύστασιν) of soul through active knowledge.[47]

Maximus describes this stability of soul as immobile (ἀκίνητος) and a type of *apatheia*. Acceptance of divine love provides the ground for fixity in the divine life: a life that cannot be shaken. It is at once gift and human achievement.

In the flight from negative self-love, Maximus does not deny a place for *eros*, nor its replacement, but insists on its transformation and redirection. Maximus extols a positive form of self-love. However, he is not simply condoning a licit form of self-serving activity. Rather, he shows that proper self-love has two related objects of its desire—knowledge of the creator and the cultivation of the beautiful soul:

> The true love of God in understanding, as well as the soul's complete denial of the affections of the body and this world, is deliverance from all these evils and the short road to salvation; by this denial, we cast away the desire of pleasure and the fear of pain, and free ourselves from evil self-love (τῆς κακῆς φιλαῦτιας), we are uplifted to knowledge of the Creator. And having exchanged evil self-love for the good, intellectual self-love (ἀγαθὴν … νοερὰν … φιλαυτίαν), separated from carnal delights, we shall not cease rendering cult to God for this beautiful self-love (καλῆς φιλαυτίας), seeking from God the eternal composition of the soul. This is the true cult pleasing to God: the soul's acute diligence in virtue.[48]

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46 Rom 8:35.

47 καὶ μόνης ἀντιποιηθῶμεν τῆς θείας ἀγάπης, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἡμᾶς τοῦ θεοῦ χωρίσαι δυνήσεται, οὐ θλίψις οὐ στενοχωρία οὐ λιμὸς οὐ κίνδυνος οὐ μάχαιρα οὐδ' ὅσα τῷ ἁγίῳ ἀπηρίθμηται ἀποστόλῳ κατὰ τὸν τόπον, διὰ τῆς κατ' ἐνέργειαν γνώσεως, τῆς ἀγάπης ἐν ἡμῖν ἀκινήτου μενούσης, τῆς ψυχῆς ἀΐδιόν τε καὶ ἄρρητον ἐξ αὐτοῦ χορηγούμενοι εὐφροσύνην καὶ σύστασιν. *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 41).

48 Πάντων δὲ τούτων τῶν κακῶν ἐστιν ἀπαλλαγὴ καὶ σύντομος πρὸς σωτηρίαν ὁδὸς ἡ ἀληθὴς τοῦ θεοῦ κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν ἀγάπη καὶ ἡ καθόλου τῆς κατὰ ψυχὴν πρός τε τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον στοργῆς ἐξάρνησις, καθ' ἣν, τῆς μὲν ἡδονῆς τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, τῆς ὀδύνης δὲ τὸν φόβον ἀποβαλόμενοι, τῆς κακῆς ἐλευθερούμεθα φιλαυτίας, πρὸς τὴν γνῶσιν ἀναβιβασθέντες τοῦ κτίσαντος, καί, πονηρᾶς ἀγαθὴν ἀντιλαβόντες νοερὰν φιλαυτίαν, σωματικῆς κεχωρισμένην στοργῆς, οὐ παυόμεθα λατρεύοντες τῷ θεῷ διὰ ταύτης τῆς καλῆς φιλαυτίας, ἐκ θεοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀεὶ

For Maximus, humanity indirectly cultivates this positive form of self-love. Through focus on God and detachment to the world, the human being is returned to himself properly ordered. Attentiveness to God and being uplifted to the Creator engender a positive form of self-love and growth in the beauty of the soul. The beauty of the soul is marked by the presence of God that dwells in the perfected human soul. In other words, humanity's response to God's *philanthropia* is our expression of love for the divine (φιλοθεΐα).[49] In this exchange, we enjoy this positive form of φιλαυτία.

7 Transfigured Eros of the Human Soul

Maximus sees eros as a key feature of the human psyche's movement toward God. In *Question 10*, Maximus presents a vision of the saints before the divine throne. He ascribes different positions before the divine majesty to those who persevere in holiness in varying degrees of intensity throughout their earthly life. Maximus reserves the most privileged place, the face-to-face encounter, for those who have most intently directed their desire toward God: "The ones who stand in front of the Lord are those who, because of their overflowing, erotic boiling (δι' ὑπερβάλλουσαν … ἐρωτικήν τῆς κατὰ νοῦν ἐφέσεως ζέσιν) of their intellectual desire for divine beauty, are made worthy of the enjoyment face to face."[50] To be clear, Maximus's account of eros is not simply unbridled, passionate desire. The love of the divinized is continually moderated by holy fear, a sort of divine awe, which maintains the intensity of erotic love aflame for the divine, lest it deform.[51] Maximus's qualification of transformed eros helps guard against the potential problem he inherited from earlier Christian authors regarding the fall of the soul. In order to briefly review this problem, which I treated above, Origen teaches that the fall of man was a result of the

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ζητοῦντες τὴν σύστασιν. Αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν ἀληθὴς λατρεία καὶ ὄντως θεάρεστος ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς διὰ τῶν ἀρετῶν ἀκριβὴς ἐπιμέλεια. *qu. Thal.* intro. (CCSG 7: 39).

49 Cf. *qu. Thal.* 8 (CCSG 7: 77).

50 τοὺς δὲ ἐμπρὸς τοὺς δι'ὑπερβάλλουσαν περὶ τὸ θεῖον κάλλος ἐρωτικὴν τῆς κατὰ νοῦν ἐφέσεως ζέσιν ἀξιωθέντας τῆς πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον ἀπολαύσεως. *qu. Thal.* 10 (CCSG 7: 87).

51 "According to this interpretation, it is possible also which God is fearsome to those who surround him, insofar mixed with fear is the love of those who love him and who are near him. When love separates itself from fear, it is by nature prone to degradation, just like many things change." Κατὰ ταύτην τὴν ἐκδοχὴν τυχὸν καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς περικύκλῳ αὐτοῦ φοβερός ἐστιν ὁ θεός, ὡς ἐγκεκραμένην φόβῳ ποιῶν τὴν τῶν ἀγαπώντων αὐτὸν καὶ περὶ αὐτὸν γενησομένων ἀγάπην. Φόβου γὰρ καθ' ἑαυτὴν κεχωρισμένη ἡ ἀγάπη εἰς καταφρόνησιν πέφυκεν ὡς τὰ πολλὰ μεταπίπτειν, μὴ οἷον στομουμένης φόβῳ τῆς ἐξ αὐτῆς τικτομένης φυσικῶς παρρησίας. Ibid.

satiety (κόρος) of the soul, which thereby drifted away from God. Gregory of Nyssa recognizes the problem of divine satiety—it happened once, it could possibly happen again—and develops an alternative rendering of divine progress in his mystical writings. As Blowers observes, Maximus recognizes that perpetual growth in one's desire for God does not by itself secure one against some future lapse.[52] Maximus develops his own response to this problem most famously in *Ambiguum 7*.[53] However, in *Question 55* he also provides some answers. Interpreting a passage of Leviticus that permits the Hebrews to have gentile slaves, he offers an allegorical response, perhaps modeled on Plato's image of the soul as a chariot led by two horses in *Phaedrus*. For Maximus, these gentile servants are the spirited and the desirous parts of man (θυμός—ἐπιθυμία). These faculties, under the yoke of reason (λόγος), can be transformed. Maximus explores the transformative consequences of the submission of these faculties to reason. Ἐπιθυμία becomes "divine eros" and θυμός becomes "a spiritual boiling, enflamed, perpetual movement"—a "wise hysteria (σώφρονα μανίαν)."[54] This wise hysteria is another name for ecstasy, as it describes the process by which the wise mind moves from created realities in one's mind outward to God. Maximus's description of these passionate states as gentiles is important in his description of the human passions. Following Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, he holds that the passions are consequent to man's Fall and therefore not original to his constitution. However, emphasizing their transformation, Maximus argues that they are not just a reality contingent on temporal existence. Rather, these transfigured emotions enjoy permanence in the human psyche. Continuing the metaphor, he states these passions (or "gentile slaves") are transformed by grace into "true Hebrews."[55] By this, Maximus sees human emotional activity not as simply foreign, but as part of the providential plan of God to incorporate all aspects of human nature—including the human psyche—into the fullness of redemption.

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52 Blowers, *Perpetual Progress*, 157.

53 Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 172–222.

54 ποιεῖται τόν τε θυμὸν καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν, τὴν μὲν πρὸς τὴν ἀκήρατον τοῦ θείου ἔρωτος ἡδονὴν καὶ τὴν ἄχραντον θέλξιν μετασκευάζων, τὸν δὲ πρὸς ζέσιν πνευματικὴν καὶ διάπυρον ἀεικινησίαν καὶ σώφρονα μανίαν μεταβιβάζων. *qu. Thal.* 55 (CCSG 7: 499). Maximus, perhaps defending himself against accusations of irreverence, cites Festus's ejaculation, "You are a fool, Paul!" (Acts 26:24) as proof that Paul experienced such "temperate mania." One can detect Maximus's positive appreciation of Paul elsewhere in *qu. Thal.* 29 (CCSG 7: 211–217).

55 ἀποτελῶν ἑβραίους ἀληθινοὺς κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοὺς ἀλλοφύλους δούλους. *qu. Thal.* 55 (CCSG 7: 501). Paul Blowers describes Maximus's view more cautiously and underscores the contingent nature of the passible faculties. For his view, see Blowers, "Gentiles of the Soul," esp. 70; 84–85.

Related to the capacity of eros to lead mankind to its eternal destination, eros figures into Maximus's thinking on dealing with suffering. In *Question 47*, he offers an extended analysis of scriptural verses related to human suffering and offers a way for the Christian to deal with it:

> For this reason as a prize of virtue and of the toils for the sake of virtue, anyone who has struggled well (καλῶς) according to the rules,[56] has defeated pleasure with their desire for virtue (τῷ πόθῳ τῆς ἀρετῆς), has trampled pain with their desire for knowledge (τῷ τῆς γνώσεως ἔρωτι), and, by both of these desires, has endured the divine struggles, will see the salvation of God. For it is said "all flesh will see the salvation of God."[57]

Desire is an essential feature of the psyche that helps one to endure suffering. However, Maximus clarifies that this is not eros in a general sense, but the eros proper to faithful Christians, who have cultivated some form of virtue:

> All flesh, which is to say a believer, according to the phrase, "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh";[58] this clearly refers to the one who believes. It is not meant in a general way, which all flesh will see the salvation of God, nor the flesh of the impious, for if indeed it is true what the passage reveals, "Let the impious be removed so that he may not see the glory of God."[59]

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56 Cf. 2 Tim 2:5.

57 Ὅθεν, ὥσπερ ἔπαθλον ἀρετῆς καὶ τῶν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς καμάτων, οἷα καλῶς τε καὶ νομίμως ἀθλήσας καὶ τὴν ἡδονὴν νικήσας τῷ πόθῳ τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τὴν ὀδύνην πατήσας τῷ τῆς γνώσεως ἔρωτι καὶ δι' ἀμφοτέρων γενναίως τοὺς θείους διενέγκας ἀγῶνας, ὄψεται τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ. Καὶ ὄψεται γάρ φησιν πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ." *qu. Thal.* 47 (CCSG 7: 323). Cf. Lk 3:6.

58 Acts 2:17; Jl 3:1.

59 πᾶσα σάρξ, δηλονότι πιστή, κατὰ τὸ ἐκχεῶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματός μου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν σάρκα, δηλαδὴ τὴν πιστεύσασαν. Οὐχ ἁπλῶς οὖν πᾶσα σὰρξ ὄψεται τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, οὔτε γὰρ ἡ τῶν ἀσεβῶν σάρξ, εἴπερ ἀληθὴς ὁ ἀποφαινόμενος λόγος ἀρθήτω ὁ ἀσεβής, ἵνα μὴ ἴδῃ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου, ἀλλὰ προσδιωρισμένως πᾶσα πιστὴ σάρξ. *qu. Thal.* 47 (CCSG 7: 323) Cf. Is 26:10. It is tempting to think that Maximus discusses the flesh in relation to eros in order to discuss what rightly ordered physical desire in the Christian life might look like. He is most likely led to discuss flesh because he has referenced the passage in Luke and is led to Joel's prophecy because of the lexical usage of σάρξ. Using parallel biblical *loci* and vocabulary choices is a common feature of patristic exegesis. See Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of a Christian Culture*, 119–139.

Maximus aligns the desire of the believer to reach God with *apatheia*, which is the grace by which the desirous soul receives the divine vision:

> Such a man will see the salvation of God, the one who is pure of heart, with this heart, through virtues and pious thoughts he will see God at the end of his struggles, for it is written, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."[60] For, having exchanged their struggles for virtue with the grace of *apatheia*, nothing greater reveals God for those who possess this grace.[61]

That Maximus equates the purity of heart spoken about in the Beatitudes with *apatheia* helps to understand what Maximus means in talking about the types of desires that help to overcome suffering. Maximus envisions a converted eros, given by grace and cultivated by exercising the virtuous life. This sort of eros exists in the life of the faithful, without which sufferings would be insurmountable and positive movement back to God would be impossible.

8 God's Eros in *Ad Thalassium*

Maximus follows Gregory in his consideration of eros as a process to lead the soul toward the divine in the present life. As well, he holds that an intense form of eros remains with the saints who encircle the throne of God. Does Maximus speak about eros as a property of God in *Ad Thalassium*? He seems to allude to this at least once. In *Question 49*, he discusses a passage from 2 Chronicles. Thalassius asks for a spiritual interpretation of King Hezekiah's plot to block the fountains of Jerusalem in an effort to defeat the invasion of Sennacherib, king of the Assyrians.[62] Maximus envisions Jerusalem as a model of the human

60 Mt 5:8.

61 ὁ τοιοῦτος εἰκότως ὄψεται τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, καθαρὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ γενόμενος· καθ' ἣν διὰ τῶν ἀρετῶν καὶ τῶν εὐσεβῶν θεωρημάτων ὁρᾷ τὸν θεὸν ἐπὶ τέλει τῶν ἄθλων, κατὰ τὸ μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται, τῶν ὑπὲρ ἀρετῆς πόνων τῆς ἀπαθείας τὴν χάριν ἀντιλαβών, ἧς οὐδὲν πλέον τὸν θεὸν ἐμφανίζει τοῖς ἔχουσι. *qu. Thal.* 47 (CCSG 7: 325).

62 Thalassius's full question occurs in a series about the historical books of the Old Testament: "What does it mean in the same book: 'And when Hezekiah saw which Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, he planned with his elders and his mighty men to stop the water of the springs which were outside the city; and they helped him. A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the brook which flowed through the land, saying, "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?"' What is the contemplative meaning of these passages?" 2 Ch 32:2–4 (CCSG 7: 351).

soul,[63] with Hezekiah and his armies as the various powers of the soul. He then conceives of the war with Sennacherib as an allegory for the interior fight against the passions:

> Every mind, girded with divine power, possesses "elders and leaders" like Hezekiah. The first is the rational power. From this power is born naturally a gnostic faith. With this gnostic faith, the mind is taught ineffably that God is eternally present and mixes himself with the future things by faith, as though they were present. The second is the desirous power. By this power, divine love is established. Because of divine love, the mind, having willingly nailed itself to the longing of unmixed divinity, possesses the indissoluble desire for which it longs. And again, certainly also the spirited power: By this power, one holds tightly to divine peace, drawing the movement of its desire toward divine eros (πρὸς τὸν θεῖον ἔρωτα).[64]

Maximus develops an extended analogical exegesis to make his point about the soul. Just as Hezekiah had the elders and leaders advise him in the fight against the Assyrians, the human mind is assisted by certain powers—the rational, desirous, and spirited powers—in the war against the passions. In particular, the spirited power functions to draw the soul toward divine eros. Here, the text is ambiguous. Does Maximus intend divine eros as a God-like quality that the soul is led to possess, or does he mean we are drawn to God, divine love himself? Given that, earlier in the passage, the diligent soul receives divine love in its ascent to the divine, Maximus understands divine eros as an

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Maximus's responses to this series represent one of the largest, sustained reflections on the historical books of the Old Testament in patristic literature.

63 To establish this claim, he plays on the etymology of the name Jerusalem as "soul." On Maximus's use of etymology in his exegesis, see Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy*, 203–210.

64 πᾶς νοῦς, κατὰ τὸν Ἐζεκίαν θείῳ κράτει διεζωσμένος, καθάπερ πρεσβυτέρους τινὰς καὶ ἄρχοντας κέκτηται τήν τε λογικὴν δύναμιν, ἐξ ἧς ἡ γνωστικὴ γεννᾶσθαι πέφυκε πίστις, καθ' ἣν ἀεὶ παρόντα τὸν θεὸν ἀρρήτως διδάσκεται καὶ ὡς παροῦσι συγγίνεται διὰ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῖς μέλλουσι, καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν δύναμιν, καθ' ἣν ἡ θεία συνέστηκεν ἀγάπη, δι' ἧς, ἑκουσίως ἑαυτὸν προσηλώσας τῷ πόθῳ τῆς ἀκηράτου θεότητος, ἄλυτον ἔχει τοῦ ποθουμένου τὴν ἔφεσιν, ἔτι μὴν καὶ τὴν θυμικὴν δύναμιν, καθ' ἣν ἀπρὶξ τῆς θείας εἰρήνης ἀντέχεται, ἐπιστύφων πρὸς τὸν θεῖον ἔρωτα τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τὴν κίνησιν. *qu. Thal.* 55 (CCSG 7: 355). Maximus attributes these three powers to the governing faculty of the soul (ἡγεμονικόν). However, these powers are distinguished according to traditional "tripartite" language. Part of the difficulty lies in Maximus's absorption of the Stoic-inspired *apatheia* tradition from the ascetics and his grafting it onto the more traditional "tripartite" model of his predecessors.

encounter with the divine and an experience of divine love. The preposition "πρὸς" implies motion toward, suggesting the soul is already in possession of divine agape and tends toward something other than itself. In this context, divine *philanthropia* is consistent with the generosity of divine eros.[65]

9 Eros, Apatheia, and Ever-Moving Repose

Maximus's treatment of love informs his understanding of *apatheia*. Transfigured *eros* reaches out for the divine as the emotional motor that activates Christian ascent toward perfection. For this reason, Maximus possesses a wider understanding of *apatheia* than his predecessors. *Apatheia* is less a fixed target than a process of purification that one undergoes. Nevertheless, any process requires some sort of finality. Hence, for Maximus, *apatheia* fueled by erotic love for the divine finds its completion in eternal life. We must then clarify how Maximus understands *apatheia* in relation to his eschatology. To do this, we will proceed in three steps. First, I will briefly show how Maximus's stages of *apatheia* correspond to his notion of levels of Sabbath rest. Then, I will outline Maximus's account of Sabbath rest and how he comes to that conclusion through his refutation of Origenism, principally found in the *Ambigua*. Third, I will discuss Maximus's concept of ever-moving repose and how his understanding of the emotions and *apatheia* explain this oxymoron.

For Maximus, *apatheia* is a clearly defined process, established in degrees and, hence, not an all-or-nothing proposition. He explains this in *Ad Thalassium*, where he describes four levels of *apatheia*, while trying to make sense of an obscure list in the Book of Ezra:

> Or again the four thousand signify these that are called the four types of *apatheia*. The first *apatheia*, which is the total abstention of evil actions—consider these the beginners; the second is the total rejection, by reflection, of the assent to evil thoughts—which occurs in those who participate in virtue and reason; the third is the total immobility of desire regarding the passions—found in those who intellectually contemplate through the *logoi* the form of invisible realities;
>
> and the fourth *apatheia*—this is the total purification of the simple representation of the passions, occurring in those who, through knowledge

65 Osborne, *Eros Unveiled*, 164–184.

> and contemplation, have made their commanding faculty (ἡγεμονικον) a pure and clear mirror of God.[66]

Here, Maximus maps the stages of purification, the final stage resulting in the total absence of any shadow of the passions that might dim the pure soul of the divinized. Maximus's description of *apatheia* here corresponds with another level of impenetrability. In a similar way, in his *Two Hundred Chapters on Theology*, Maximus describes these levels using the biblical term "Sabbath," playing on the distinction found in Scripture between "Sabbath," "Sabbaths," and "Sabbath of Sabbaths."[67] He writes:

> "Sabbath" means the *apatheia* of a rational soul, entirely removing sin's scars by the practical virtues.
>
> "Sabbaths" means the freedom (ἐλευθερία) of a rational soul, through natural contemplation by the Spirit having put off the very activity according to nature directed at sensory perception.
>
> "Sabbath of Sabbaths" means the spiritual quietude (ἡρεμια πνευματικὴ) of the rational soul, having contracted the mind away from even all the truly divine *logoi* themselves which are in beings, and wholly having put on God alone in an erotic ecstasy (ἐρωτικὴν ἔκστασιν), and altogether making it unmovable from God through mystical theology.[68]

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66 Πρώτη γάρ ἐστιν ἀπάθεια ἡ παντελὴς ἀποχὴ τῶν κατ' ἐνέργειαν κακῶν, ἐν τοῖς εἰσαγομένοις θεωρουμένη, δευτέρα δὲ ἡ παντελὴς κατὰ διάνοιαν περὶ τὴν τῶν κακῶν συγκατάθεσιν ἀποβολὴ λογισμῶν, ἐν τοῖς μετὰ λόγου τὴν ἀρετὴν μετιοῦσι γινομένη, τρίτη ἡ κατ' ἐπιθυμίαν περὶ τὰ πάθη παντελὴς ἀκινησία ἐν τοῖς διὰ τῶν σχημάτων τοὺς λόγους νοητῶς θεωμένοις τῶν ὁρωμένων, τετάρτη ἀπάθεια ἡ καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς ψιλῆς τῶν παθῶν φαντασίας παντελὴς κάθαρσις, ἐν τοῖς διὰ γνώσεως καὶ θεωρίας καθαρὸν καὶ διειδὲς ἔσοπτρον τοῦ θεοῦ ποιησαμένοις τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν συνισταμένη. *qu. Thal.* 55 (CCSG 7: 493).

67 *Cap. th. oec.* 1.36 (PG 90:1097 A–B) cf. Is 66:23; Ex 31:13; Lv 16:31. For the biblical background regarding Maximus's notion of Sabbath rest, see Grigory Benevich, "The Sabbath in St. Maximus the Confessor," *Studi sull'Oriente Cristiano* 9, no. 1 (2005): 63–80. For discussion on Maximus's different perspectives on eschatology, see Paul M. Blowers, "Realized Eschatology in Maximus the Confessor, Ad Thalassium 22," in *Studia Patristica* 32, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 258–263; Sotiris Mitralexis, *Ever-Moving Repose: A Contemporary Reading of Maximus the Confessor's Theory of Time* (Eugene: James Clarke and Co, 2017).

68 Σάββατόν ἐστιν, ἀπάθεια ψυχῆς λογικῆς· κατὰ τὴν πρακτικὴν παντελῶς ἀποβαλομένης τῆς ἁμαρτίας τὰ στίγματα. Σάββατά ἐστιν, ἐλευθερία ψυχῆ, λογικῆς καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν κατὰ φύσιν πρὸς αἴσθησιν, διὰ τῆς ἐν πνεύματι φυσικῆς θεωρίας, ἀποθεμένης ἐνέργειαν. Σάββατα Σαββάτων ἐστὶν, ἡρεμία πνευματικὴ ψυχῆς λογικῆς· καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῶν πάντων τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὖσι θειοτέρων

For Maximus, rest does not entail an absence of activity. This rest is full of emotional content, calling it an erotic ecstasy (ἐρωτικὴν ἔκστασιν). Paradoxically, however, Maximus elsewhere describes the Sabbath rest as a cessation from all motion.[69] Maximus's engagement with Origenism can help explain the tension between emotional movement and motionlessness. Sherwood has famously pointed out that Maximus's eschatology and concept of rest is aimed at refuting elements of the Origenism creation myth.[70] The *locus classicus* for this is *Ambiguum 7*. Maximus's point of departure lays in his defense of Gregory the Theologian's words in the oration *On Love for the Poor*:

> And what is this great mystery? Or is it God's will that we, who are a portion of God (μοῖραν Θεοῦ) and have flowed down from above (ἄνωθεν ῥεύσαντας), not become exalted and lifted up on account of this dignity, and so despise our Creator?[71]

Maximus immediately sets out to interpret the passage, guarding against some "facile solution" proposed by the heterodox.[72] He lays out the view that he aims to confute, which I summarize here: there once existed a single entity (ἑνάς), or originary unity, where every soul was united to God. After the Fall there was a division into multiplicity. Sherwood identifies this teaching as Origen's and concludes that Maximus sets up his argument consciously in distinction to those who espouse this problematic strand of Origenism.[73] According to the Origenist view, movement and dispersion into multiplicity proceeds from this Fall from originary stasis. Maximus corrects Origen's starting point that coming into being or genesis precedes movement.[74] For Maximus, this movement

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λόγων τὸν νοῦν συστειλάσης· καὶ μόνῳ τῷ Θεῷ κατ᾽ ἐρωτικὴν ἔκστασιν ὁλικῶς ἐνδησάσις, καὶ παντελῶς ἀκίνητον αὐτὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ τῆς μυστικῆς θεολογίας ποισάσης. *Cap. th. oec.*, 1.37–39 (PG 90: 1097A–D; trans. Sales 65–67, modified).

69 Cf. *ambig.* 65 (PG 91: 1392C); cf. *qu. Thal.* 65 (CCSG 22: 279).

70 Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 72–222.

71 καὶ τί τὸ μέγα τοῦτο μυστήριον; ἢ βούλεται μοῖραν ἡμᾶς ὄντας Θεοῦ καὶ ἄνωθεν ῥεύσαντας, ἵνα μὴ διὰ τὴν ἀξίαν ἐπαιρόμενοι καὶ μετεωριζόμενοι καταφρονῶμεν τοῦ κτίσαντος. *ambig.* 7 (PG 91: 1068D; trans. Constas, 75); cf. Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.* 14.7 (PG 35: 865C).

72 *ambig.* 7 (PG 91: 1069A).

73 *princ.* 2.1.1 (SC 252: 230–232; trans. Butterworth, 94); Sherwood argues Maximus's knowledge of this aspect of Origenism comes from Justinian's *ep. Ad Menam* (*Iustiniani Edictum Contra Origenem*), *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* 3:211. Blowers agrees; see *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 46 n2. For comment on other texts that present this Origenist tradition, see Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 72–91.

74 *ambig.* 7 (PG 91: 1069D); cf. *ambig.* 15 (PG 91: 1217D). For the Dionysian background to this teaching. See *Ecc. Hier.* 2.6, 3.1, 3.7, 4.3, 7.6.

is naturally oriented toward the desirable end, which is God. Maximus unequivocally describes "rest"—the step in the triad—in terms of *apatheia*:

> Accordingly, no created being has yet ceased from the natural power which moves it to its proper end, neither has it found rest from the activity which impels it toward its proper end, nor harvested the fruit of this passible movement, impassibility and immobility (τὸ ἀπαθές καὶ ἀκινητον). For it belongs to God alone to be the end, and the completion, and the impassible, since He is unmoved, complete, and not subject to passion.[75]

On this view, Sherwood claims that Maximus is operating out of an Aristotelian position that all created beings operate toward some end.[76] Yet his analysis is misleading. He evaluates Maximus's triad—genesis, movement, and rest—solely in ontological terms. While Maximus may borrow metaphysical language, one must remember the moral reasons for his discussion.[77] Maximus is describing the proper way to understand human fallenness and the ascent to God, which takes place through human moral decision-making. Furthermore, he explains motion in terms of directing one's desire towards God. This necessarily puts Maximus's correction of Origen squarely within the framework of his essential ascetic understanding of the emotions, one conditioned by his monastic experience and teaching on *apatheia*. It is not simply unbridled eros, which brings humans into union with the divine, but the transmuted eros as well, which seeks the face of God in purity of heart. Sherwood's analysis, in

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75 Οὔπω οὖν οὐδαμῶς οὐδὲν τῶν γενητῶν τὴν φυσικὴν δύναμιν πρὸς τὸ κατ' αὐτὴν τέλος κινουμένην ἔστησεν, οὐδὲ τῆς ἐνεργείας ἐπαύσατο τῷ κατ' αὐτὴν τέλει προσερεῖσαν αὐτήν, οὐδὲ τοῦ κατὰ κίνησιν πάθους τὸν καρπὸν ἐδρέψατο, τὸ ἀπαθές, φημί, καὶ ἀκίνητον. Μόνου γὰρ Θεοῦ τὸ τέλος εἶναι καὶ τὸ τέλειον καὶ τὸ ἀπαθές. (PG 91: 1073B; trans. Constas, 85).

76 "The Maximian refutation here starts from the idea of motion as essentially directed to an end. But motion is only conceivable as some *thing* which already has come to be in its one unalterable substance (οὐσία). We are then in the presence of this triad: becoming, motion, end. Whence has Maximus derived it? The ring of the whole is somewhat Aristotelian." Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua*, 98. Sherwood goes on to observe that Maximus's language reflects similar comments found in Alexander of Aphrodisias. He pins Maximus's source, however, on Evagrius. *The Earlier Ambigua*, 100.

77 Elsewhere, Sherwood claims that Maximus distinguishes between ontological fixedness (παγιότης) and moral immutability (ἀτρεψία). *The Earlier Ambigua*, 196–197. For another view, see Luis J. Sales: "For [Maximus] there was no clear dividing line between ethics and metaphysics, since the former was simply the working out of the latter." "Introduction," *Maximus the Confessor: Two Hundred Chapters on Theology*, trans. Luis J. Sales (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2015), 33.

making a distinction Maximus himself would not make, separates the moral from the ontological all too readily.

Hence, for Maximus, rest is none other than ascetic perfection that he envisions as *apatheia*. Maximus, however, uses another metaphor to describe eschatological repose in *Ad Thalassium*; he calls it "ever-moving repose (ἀεικίνητος στάσις)." The discussion of this passage is found in two places. First, in *Question 59*, where Maximus discusses the passage of 1 Peter. What does the "the end of faith" mean? Maximus responds in an eschatological key:

> The fullness of desire is the ever-moving repose of those who desire in the presence of the desirable object. Ever-moving repose is the continual and uninterrupted enjoyment of the desirable object. Continual and uninterrupted enjoyment is a participation in the divine realities beyond nature.[78]

Plass rightly observes that this oxymoron is derived from Neoplatonism. It is an attempt to find an analogy in the incorporeal world for movement and motion in the corporeal world.[79] Maximus is trying to offer an account of activity in a world beyond time.[80] Maximus's various attempts to describe ever-moving repose suggest a different view. Maximus relies greatly on emotional activity to characterize the divine life of the divinized and, therefore, one must consider the moral framework that he establishes elsewhere in his discussion of the purification of emotion. Divinized emotions belong to the morally perfect, who experience desire boiling in the fire of awe-filled fear before the Lord[81] mixed with participatory sadness experienced for the non-divinized below on Earth.[82] In fact, Maximus consistently describes the resting place of the saints

78 ἐφέσεως δὲ πλήρωσίς ἐστιν ἡ περὶ τὸ ἐφετὸν τῶν ἐφιεμένων ἀεικίνητος στάσις· ἀεικίνητος δὲ στάσις ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ ἐφετοῦ διηνεκής τε καὶ ἀδιάστατος ἀπόλαυσις· ἀπόλαυσις δὲ διηνεκὴς καὶ ἀδιάστατος ἡ τῶν ὑπὲρ φύσιν θείων καθέστηκε μέθεξις, *qu. Thal.* 59 (CCSG 22, 53); cf. *qu. Thal.* 65 (CCSG 22, 285).

79 "This is a typically Neo-Platonic [*sic*] piece of verbal dialectic designed to define the indefinable. Phenomenal στάσις and κίνησις are finite and temporal. Transcendent στάσις is not temporal, and insofar as it defines the entire post-temporal state (in the sequence γένεσις/κίνησις/στάσις), there can be no κίνησις in it." Plass, "'Moving Rest' in St. Maximus the Confessor," 181. Plass is largely dependent on the work of Stephen Gersh, who studies the analogous concept in later Neoplatonism, see id., *Kinesis Akinetos* (Leiden: Brill, 1973). Larchet contends that Gregory of Nyssa is the more likely source for this kind of language. See id., *La Divinization de l'homme*, 667–670.

80 See most recently Mitralexis, *Ever-Moving Repose*.

81 *qu. Thal.* 10 (CCSG 7: 87).

82 *Qu. d.* 129 (CCSG 10: 94).

in terms of their emotional activity. His reasons for this are threefold. First, for Maximus any discussion of motion is not for the sake of describing the locomotion of an object. Rather, he aims at clarifying the moral ascent of a Christian engaged in the ascetic life. Hence, to describe ever-moving repose in Maximus is to discuss the highest point of *apatheia*. Second, emotional activity is a helpful way to discuss a type of non-physicalized activity or motion appropriate to the divine life. The emotions of the saints personify "ever-moving repose." In a realm devoid of space and time, to talk of physical locomotion, such as spinning around the throne of God, is an analogy of limited use for physical movement that is susceptible to change and corruptibility. Maximus instead speaks of the transformed, stable emotions that offer vivid pictures of the infinite life with God, while maintaining language proper to divinity.[83] Third, his description of rest is consistent with the monastic ideal that forms the basis of his thinking. Maximus describes rest in terms of *apatheia*, a state devoid of sinful, passionate, emotional activity but granted stability of soul insofar as it participates in the object of desire and is charged with positive and holy emotions. A corollary to the *apatheia* of the divinized is the height of spiritual perfection found on Earth for those who have perfected contemplation. The heights of prayer are denoted by the imperturbability to vicious passions and the enjoyment of full-blooded, transfigured emotions. In this, Maximus follows Evagrius, whose characterization of monastic perfection is strikingly similar: "Blessed is the soul, who at the time of prayer has achieved perfect insensibility."[84] Yet, this *apatheia* experienced in prayer is coupled with the presence of the erotic. "The state of prayer is the habitual state of *apatheia*. It snatches to the heights of intelligible reality, which loves wisdom and which is truly spiritualized by the most intense love."[85] Maximus's eschatological vision is an extension of

83 There is an instructive parallel here to the Nicaean controversy over the terminology "generated" versus "created." The former was eventually preferred to avoid talk about the created nature of the Son in a way that would render him less than divine. While the saints are creatures, Maximus wishes to talk about their movement so as to avoid any kind of motion that could be construed as temporal and less than divinized.

84 Μακάριός ἐστιν ὁ νοῦς, ὁ κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς προσευχῆς τελείαν ἀναισθησίαν κτησάμενος. *De oratione* 120 (SC 589: 338). Here "insensibility" (ἀναισθησία) acts as a synonym of ἀπάθεια.

85 *De oratione* 52 (trans. Bamberger, 63). On the equivalence of prayer and ecstasy, see Virginia Burrus, "Praying is Joying: Musings on Love in Evagrius Ponticus," in *Toward a Theology of Eros: Transfiguring Passion at the Limits of Discipline*, ed. Virginia Burrus and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 194–204. Evagrius is also more careful in his description of enjoyment in prayer, for he thinks that those in this state are more susceptible to the attack of the *logismos* of porneia. On this theme, see Kevin Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul, and Body in the 4th Century* (New York: Ashgate, 2009), 61–63.

his monastic ideal, grounded in the ecstasy of experience in prayer. Perfected contemplation in prayer serves merely as a foretaste of the emotional activity experienced in the eschatological sabbath, which is prepared for those who undergo the ascetic transformation of their own passions. As a result, the passions become the very instruments by which we relate to God in the divine life and exemplify the eternal movement found in Sabbath Rest.

In Maximus's account of the process of acquisition of *apatheia*, one finds a world filled with helpful emotions to aid the continual striving toward God; the diligent Christian uses fear, grief, and love to navigate, move, and perfect the human psyche. However, as I explained above, human subjective use of converted passibility begins with Christ's objective expression of his *philanthropia*, which Maximus explains in this way: "By his passion he grants us *apatheia*, and by his sufferings, liberation, and by his death, life eternal."[86] In the last stage, Maximus announces the goal: to become a pure mirror of God. The final goal of *apatheia* is to be another Paul, whose apostolic charism incarnates Christ in this world and in this life. The emotional activity that takes place in gradations of *apatheia* marks a transformation from the irrational manifestations of deviant passions to Christological instantiations of stable virtue in the soul. The process is fueled by love, assisted by the other passions. It requires divine initiative. Maximus holds that God motivates ecstatic motion of the human soul toward the divine.[87] Appropriated by the human being, the divine pursuit for perfection is accompanied by intense affective activity. Maximus writes that the New Testament moves the human being towards God, "flying by the fire of love."[88] Biblical revelation is an example of God's *philanthropia*. The Word of God reinforces and tends to the intensity of man's yearning and ecstatic desire for God throughout the stages of *apatheia*. It is only in the love of God that Maximus's vision of ever-moving repose comes into focus. For it is there where "God and man are joined together in a single embrace."[89]

86 *qu. Thal.* 61 (CCSG 22: 91).

87 *ambig.* 7 (PG 91: 1073B).

88 καὶ ἡ μὲν παλαιὰ σῶμα, πρὸς ψυχὴν λογισθέν, διὰ μέσων ἀναβιβάζει τῶν ἀρετῶν, κωλύουσα τοῦ πρὸς σῶμα τὸν νοῦν καταβιβάζεσθαι, ἡ δὲ νέα τὸν νοῦν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀναβιβάζει, τῷ πυρὶ τῆς ἀγάπης πτερούμενον· καὶ ἡ μὲν ταὐτὸν ἐργάζεται τῷ νοῖ τὸ σῶμα κατὰ τὴν θέσει κίνησιν, ἡ δὲ ταὐτὸν τῷ θεῷ τὸν νοῦν ἀποτελεῖ κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν τῆς χάριτος, τοσαύτην ἔχοντα πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τὴν ἐμφέρειαν, ὥστε δι' αὐτοῦ τὸν θεὸν γνωρίζεσθαι, τὸν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ φύσιν οὐδαμῶς τὸ παράπαν οὐδενὶ γινωσκόμενον, ὡς ἔκ τινος εἰκόνος ἀρχέτυπον. Ταῦτα μὲν ὧδε κατὰ τοῦτον ἐχέτω τὸν τρόπον. *qu. Thal.* 63 (CCSG 22: 165).

89 Μέγα οὖν ἀγαθὸν ἡ ἀγάπη, καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὸ πρῶτον καὶ ἐξαίρετον ἀγαθόν, ὡς Θεὸν καὶ ἀνθρώπους δι' ἑαυτῆς περὶ τὸν αὐτὴν ἔχοντα συνάπτουσα. *Ep.* 2 (PG 91: 401C; trans. Louth, 90).

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